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ILLUSTRATED

featuring:

Harlan Ellison's
"Run for
the
Stars"

Third
Anniversary
Issue



James
Frost
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epic

ILLUSTRATED

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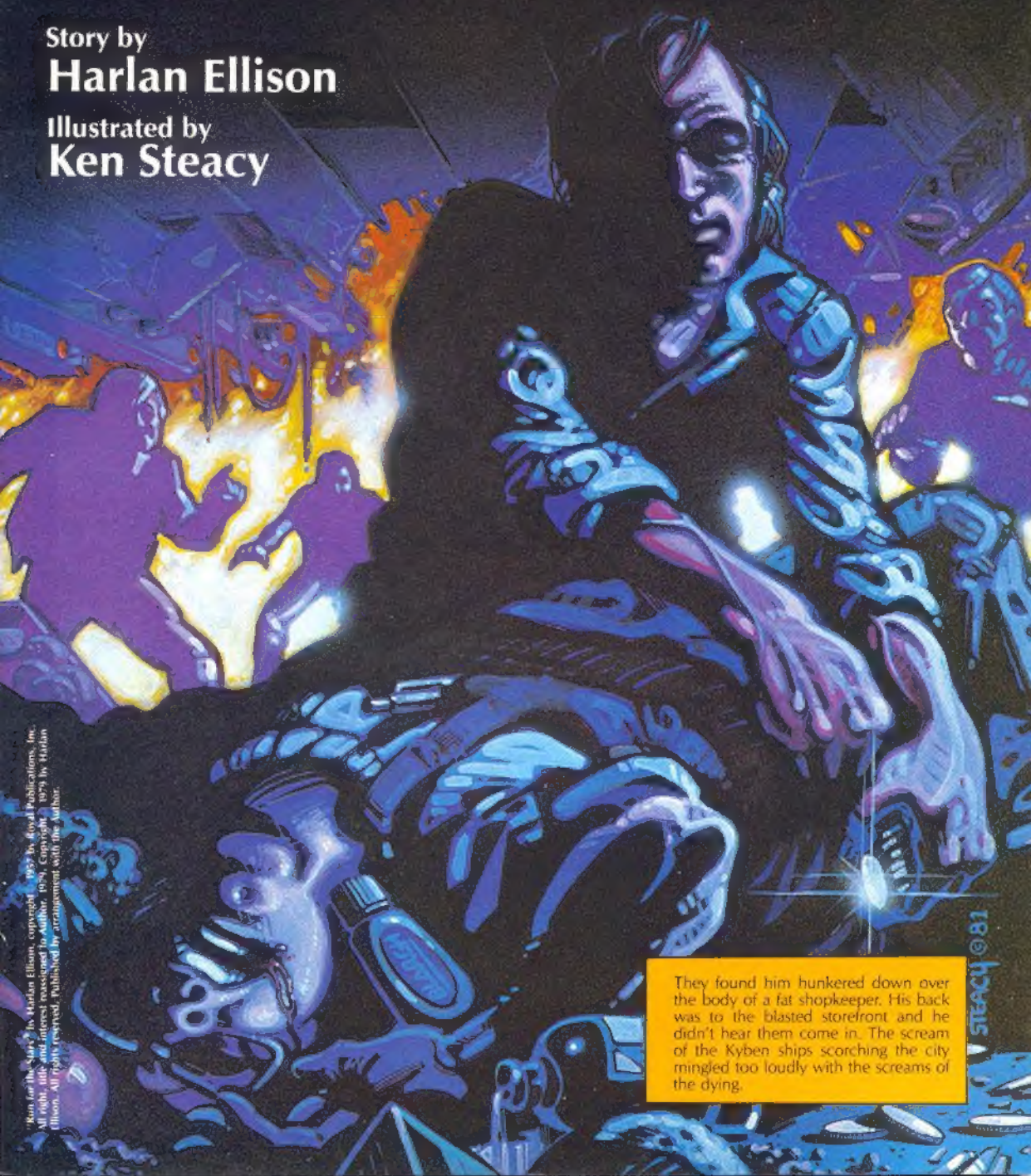
painting © 1981 James Fox

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RUN FOR THE STARS

Story by
Harlan Ellison

Illustrated by
Ken Steacy



They found him hunkered down over the body of a fat shopkeeper. His back was to the blasted storefront and he didn't hear them come in. The scream of the Kyben ships scorching the city mingled too loudly with the screams of the dying.



Lemme go! He was dead! I only wanted money to buy food — honest to God, lemme go!

This is a grocery store, you ghoul! There's food all over.

There was no use arguing and he couldn't tell them the money was to get narcotics. The entire planet was under siege and looters were shot. Perhaps it was better that way; in death the insatiable craving for the dream-dust would stop, and he would be free. But the thought of death sent chills through his body, numbing his muscles.

This the best we can do for chrissake? There's gotta be someone better!

No, Shep, I think this is our man. A dustie. Perfect. We've been looking all day for you, fella.

Whaddya want with me? Lemme go, willya!

Come on, we'll let Doc Budder go to work on him.

Behind them, the fat shopkeeper lay amidst the debris of his store, dead, safe, and uncaring.



Benno Tallant awoke during the operation. He promptly fainted again.

When he awoke the second time he remembered abruptly.



What was that? What have you done to me?

Why this snivelling garbage, Parkhurst? We've a dozen good men who would've volunteered.



Because the best job can be done by somebody who's afraid of the thing someone who'll run.

Oh God, it hurts! All over here...do something!



Self-induced cramp. Stop whining, you slug! The epidermizer is healing you through the sheet; you haven't a thing to worry about — right now



We'll be back. Don't try and get out. Aside from the fact that there's a guard on the door, you might open that incision and bleed to death before we find you.

Tallant's thoughts weren't deterred by the darkness. He remembered the dream-dust and the pains shot through him again; he remembered the past, and his mouth choked up; he remembered awakening during the operation, and he wanted to scream. The next six hours were a bright, thinking hell.



Shep came for him. He had one thing in common with the other men Tallant had seen — he was weary to the core.

Get dressed.

L-listen... do y-you know where I can lay my hands on some dream-dust...I-

No, you listen to me!

About two million people are dead out there; almost the entire population of this planet, and you sit there asking me to get your snuff! If I had my way, I'd kick you to death right now — so don't say another word! **Now move it!**

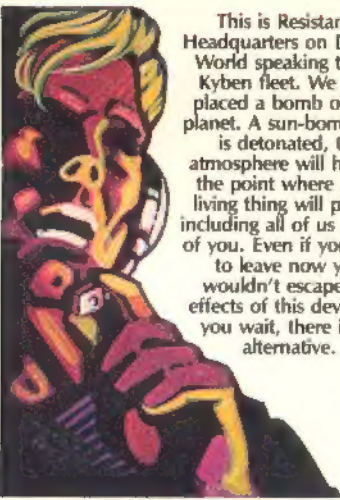




We owe you an explanation. This is the big push for the Kyben. We've got to warn Earth. The inerspace transmitters went when they burned the transpoles at the meridian. The only way we can get word home is to stall for time. That's why we need a man like you.

What are you going to do with me?
What's that thing you put in me?

Stand by...you're on.



This is Resistance Headquarters on Deald's World speaking to the Kyben fleet. We have placed a bomb on this planet. A sun-bomb. If it is detonated, the atmosphere will heat to the point where every living thing will perish, including all of us and all of you. Even if you were to leave now you wouldn't escape the effects of this device. If you wait, there is an alternative.



Tallant suddenly knew what Parkhurst meant; he knew where the bomb was hidden. He started to scream, but Shep's hand was over his mouth before the sound could escape.

The alternative is to let us go. We'll set the bomb on automatic and leave it for you to find.

There is a way it can be deactivated. If you don't comply, we'll trigger it now. You have one hour to reply.

Out.



Exactly sixty minutes later the translating machine broke the silence with a cold metallic voice, the product of changing Kyben to English.

We accept. You have seven hours to load and leave.

Let's get moving.

What about me? Tell me!

Part of that might be a bluff: there may not be a way to damp the bomb.



The Kyben have tracing devices; they'd locate the bomb in a moment if it were stationary. But it won't be. They'll think we're all gone but you'll be here carrying the bomb. You're our insurance policy.

What if I turn myself in and let them take it out like you put it in?

You won't. The first soldier who traces the bomb to you will pin you to the ground and slice you open. So the longer you keep running, the longer it takes to find you, and the better chance we have of warning Earth. In about seven hours you become real valuable. Y'know, you've got the life of the entire Kyben fleet in your belly!

The launch field was silent at last. The noise of loading the remaining thousands of Dealers had crashed back and forth for hours, and now the last ship was ready.

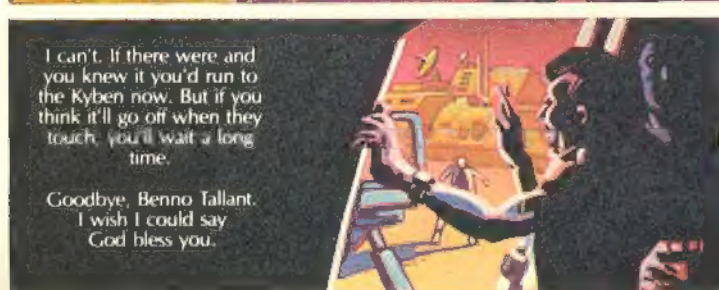
Look, you're the only assurance we have that we'll make it.

At least tell me, is there a way to damp the bomb?



I can't. If there were and you knew it you'd run to the Kyben now. But if you think it'll go off when they touch, you'll wait a long time.

Goodbye, Benno Tallant.
I wish I could say
God bless you.



Damn you!
Damn you!
You're no better
than the Kyben!



He was alone. He felt the hunger rising once more. This time he could drown himself in dream-dust and lie there in heaven till the bomb went off.

He returned to the bunker and found the



trapdoor that led down to Headquarters. A half-hour of smashing into lockers and he found Doc Budder's supply of medical dream-dust.

He snorted a packet and felt himself getting stronger. Kyben? Yes, bring them on!



He stuffed his pockets full of white packets and strutted back up to the bunker.

Then Tallant saw his first Kyban.



Abruptly, the resemblance to humans terrified him. Had they been grotesque he could hate them as monsters. But they were, if anything, more handsome than humans.

Suddenly Tallant realized that he was trapped. There was only one exit and the field was crawling with Kyben — furious enough at having been outfoxed to gut the first human they encountered. But he found a new strength and he knew what to do.





He dragged the body to the trap door, shoved it through, and followed it down. He crouched there, the blastick ready to sear off the face of anyone who lifted the door.

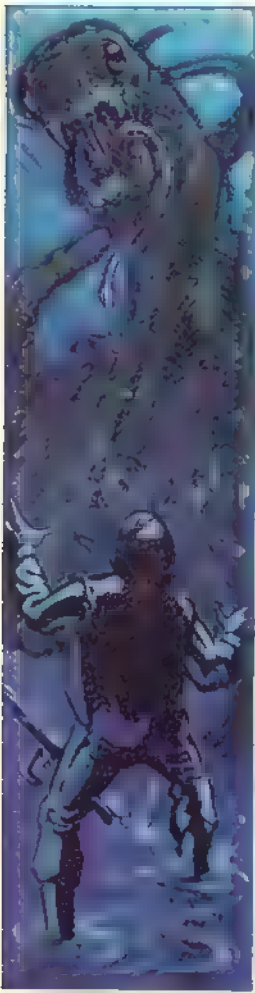
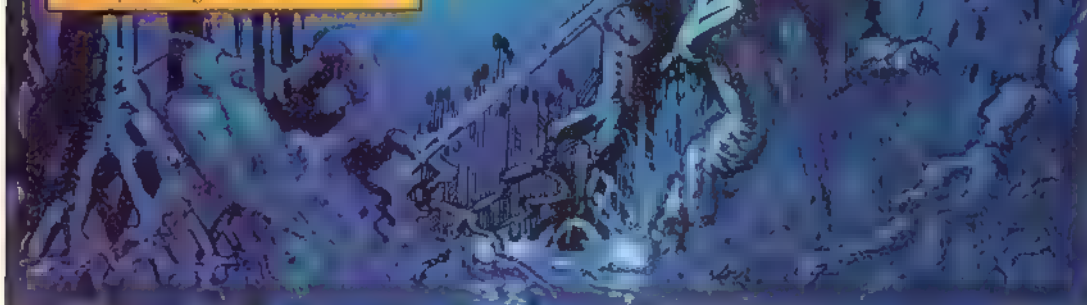


Overhead, he heard the sound of voices in the sibilant hiss of the Kyber tongue. He heard boots stomping around above him and thought he was caught — but a shout from outside called them away and they moved off.



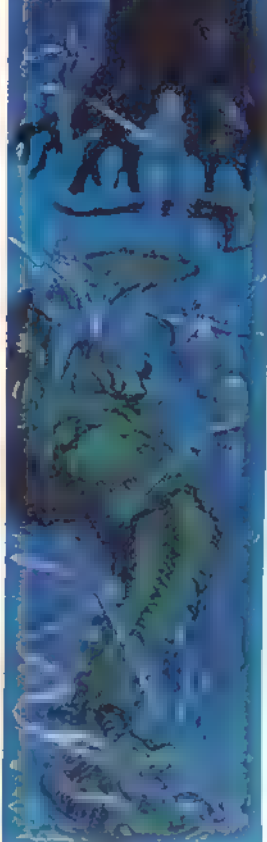
While he waited to move he snifed another packet of dust.
He was God again!

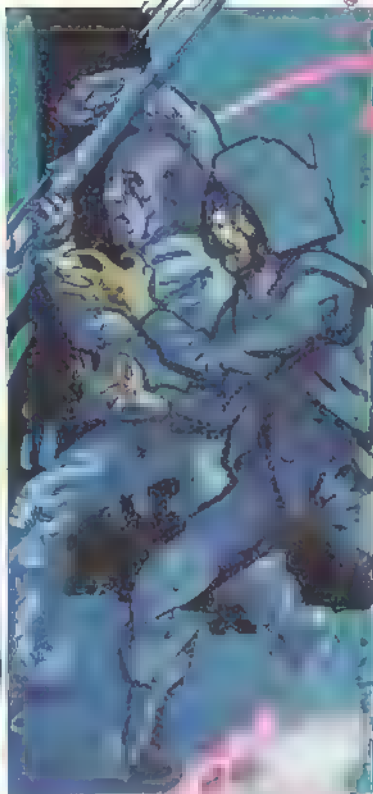
He made it as far as the Blue Marshes before another patrol found him. He'd been circling outward so that any ships tracking overhead could not pinpoint him. Eventually they would see that the target was not stationary and would recognize what the humans had done. He kept moving.



Tallant found an inexplicable identification with the beast. It had been more man than he. It had not turned and run, something in its death made him feel altered, matured. He knew now that he would never give up, and if he died, he would die on his feet.

The Kyber were too engrossed in examining their kill to study their detectors. Tallant knew he had to kill them all or the game was up.





He stared down at the pulsing mass that had been his mate before he thought of the dust that he needed for a now. The knee instinct was rising in the corner.

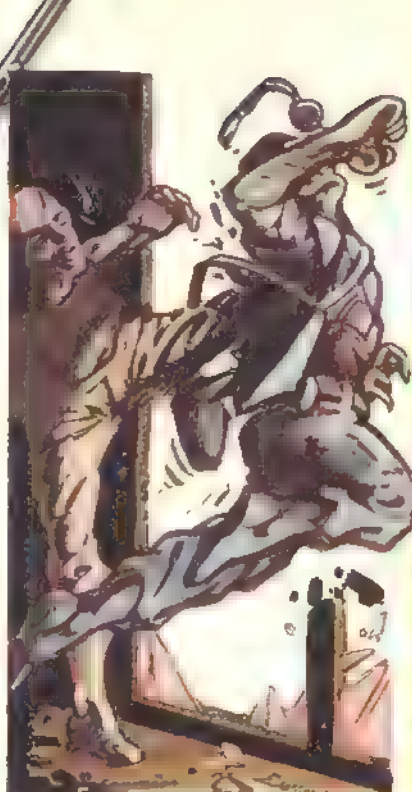
That night, on the outskirts of Xville
Ta-lant killed this third Kyben. From
the corpse he took a long knife with an
inlaid handle. It worked wondrously
well on four more
Kyben blood was yellow. He wasn't sur-
prised.



In the center of the city was the com-
mand ship of the Kyben fleet. He knew
he had to get inside and find a surgeon.



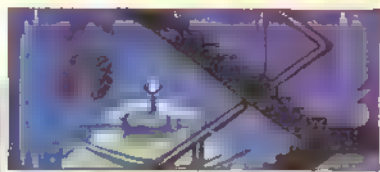
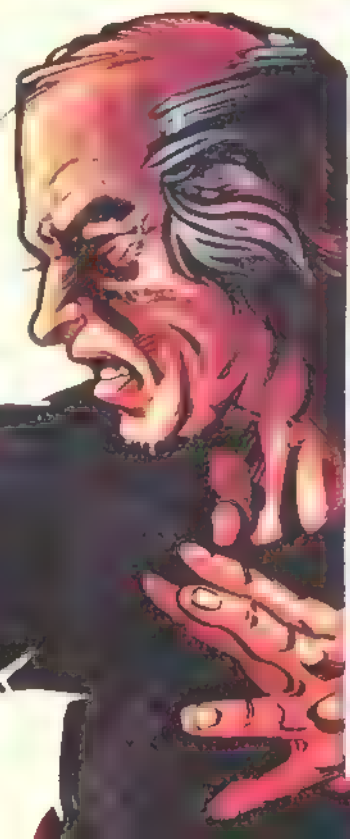
He was standing to go when the soldier
stepped into the room and froze.
A human—here, in conquered ground.



Then Ta-lant realized something.
He had only one arm.

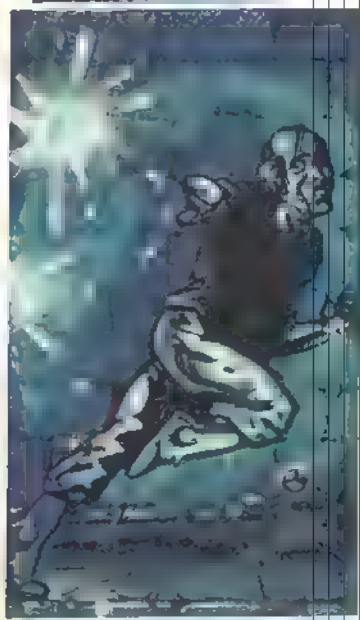
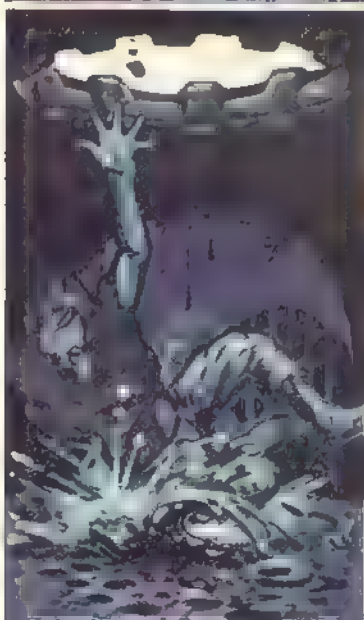
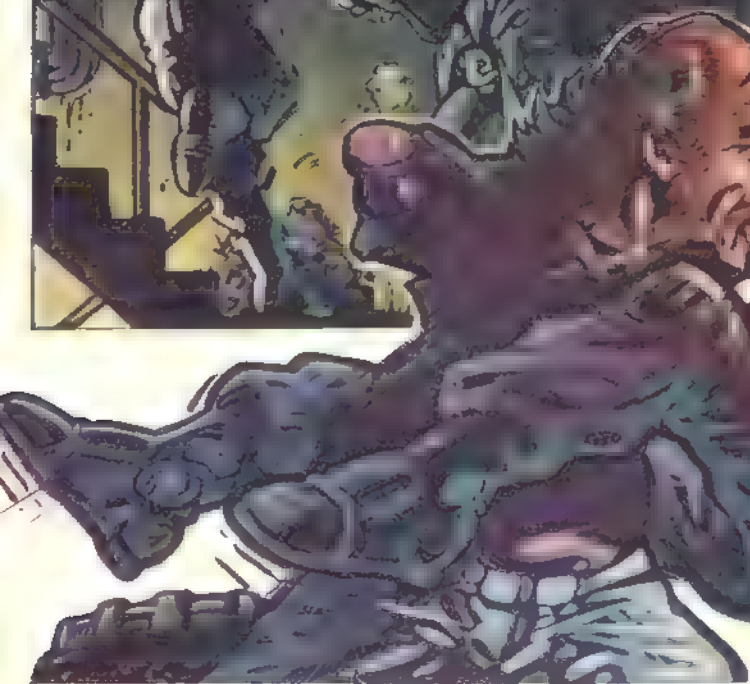
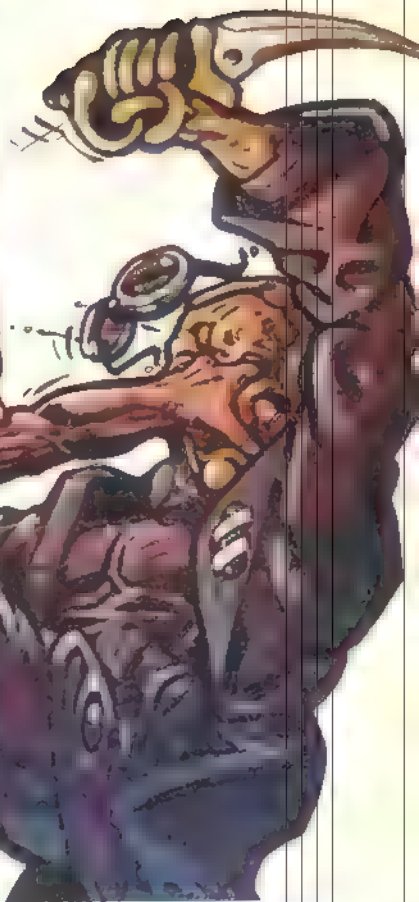
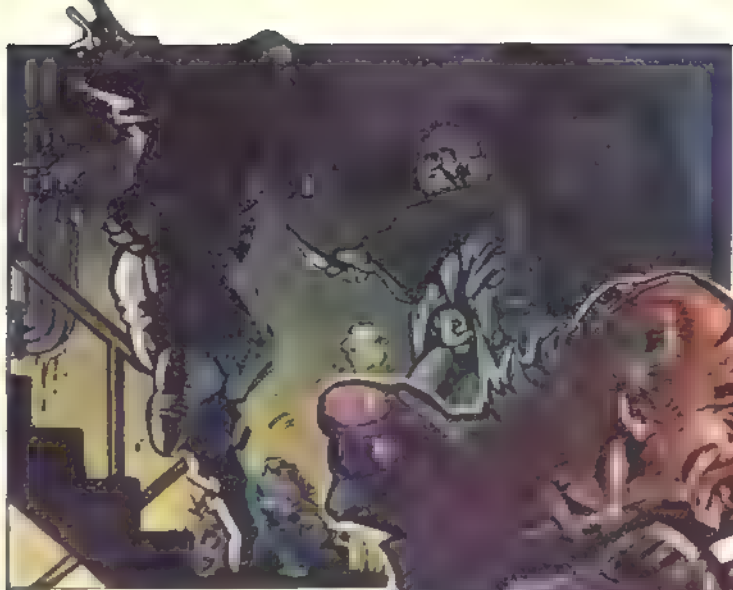
He could feel no pain; the blast had cauterized the stump immediately. But now, how could he survive? Between him and the flagships were three tortuous miles of reinforced city and the entire Kyber land-army.

Time was growing short, and he could feel it in his gut. He had no way of knowing if the bomb was near triggering time. He kept going in one direction, inexorably to the flagships.



**EARTHMAN! GIVE YOURSELF UP!
EVEN IF YOU CONTROL THE
BOMB, WE WILL
FIND YOU AND KILL YOU...
FIND YOU AND KILL YOU...
FIND YOU...KILL YOU...
FIND... KILL...**





SATURN!

JOHN ISAAC'S ABDUCTORS
PAUSE HERE TO MINE
THE GIGANTIC ICE CRYSTALS THAT
FORM THE RINGED PLANET'S TIARA...

INITIATION

ISAAC HIMSELF IS UNABLE TO
WITNESS THE CELESTIAL VISTA...

FOR SINCE
LEAVING
EARTH
HE HAS
HUNG
LIKE A
MUMMY
IN A
COOCOON
WOVEN
BY THE
XLEXU
SURGEONS!

SWING TO,
LADS! WITHOUT
WATER THIS FINE
LIMBED VESSEL
WILL LEAVE US
ALL HIGH
AND DRY!

WOULD SUCH
A LITTLE THING
STOP OUR OWN
CAPTAIN
ROTWANG?

ON THE PAN-
GALACTIC
WHALING SHIP
KNOWN TO HER
CREW AS THE
VORRIKKE
THEir ENDURE
CONTINUE

SHUT THAT MEALY GOB, NEVERSWEAT!
YOUR TACK HAMMER HAS YET TO KISS
THE ICE! WHAT AILS YE THIS TIME?

'TIS NO AFFLICTION,
MR. STAUB, BUT MERELY
THE GERM OF A LITTLE
VERSE THAT HAS BORN
ITSELF TO ME ON THIS
LOVELY SOLAR WIND!

1981
Veitch



A VERSE IS IT?
SING THEN, YE
SLY DOG, AND
LET THE REST
OF THIS GANG
BEAT TIME
WITH THEIR
HAMMERS!

WHY
THANKEE,
MISTER
STAUB!

AHEM-

OLD ROTWANG WENT A'WHALIN',
BUT HE COME BACK NONE TOO SOON.
HE'D SWAPPED HIS LEG
FOR AN UGLY PEG
TO A WHALE 'T WAS BIG AS A MOON!

NOW THIS WHALE CAME DOWN FLUKES A'FLAILIN',
AVENGIN' HIS FAMILY AND PRIDE.
TO ROTWANG'S EYES
SEEMED A FITTING PRIZE,
"TIS THE GREAT RED, ABRAXAS!" HE CRIED.

"TO THE BOATS, TO THE BOATS", SCREAMED THE CAPTAIN,
BUT THE CREW FLED B'LOW DECKS, COURAGE FAILIN'.
FOR THEY FEARED NOT THEIR MASTER
AS MUCH AS DISASTER,
SO THE OLD MAN WAS LEFT AT THE RAILIN'.

NOW ABRAXAS BEGINS THE DISMASTIN'
THE SHIP STARTS TO DROP, NOW SHE CRASHES!
THE CREW IS ALL FRIED
WHEN THE FURNACE SPLITS WIDE,
ONLY ROTWANG CRAWLS FROM THE ASHES.

SO ONCE AGAIN ROTWANG IS SAILIN',
ONLY THIS TIME 'TIS US WHO'S HIS CREW.
WILL WE KILL OLD ABRAXAS
WHEN THE GREAT RED ATTACKS US,
OR GO DOWN IN THIS LEAFY CANOE?

HEHE
HAR
HAR!

BRAVO,
NEVERWEAT!

HOOH! NEVERWEAT HAS HIT
THE MARK AGAIN AND GOT THE
REST OF THE CREW TO DO HIS
JOB TO BOOT!

BACK TO
WORK, YE
RASCAL!

MISTER
STAUB!

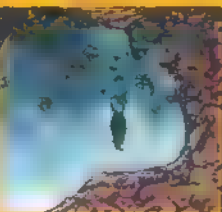


HAVE
THAT MAN
FLOGGED.

TWENTY-FIVE SCREAMS
ECHO THROUGHOUT
THE SELF-RENEWING
ATMOSPHERE OF THE
YORRIKKE.

A AYE
CAPTAIN
ROTWANG...

BUT THERE IS ONE
ABOARD WHO IS
OBLIVIOUS TO THE
AGONY.



HIS BODY UNDERGOES
WHAT THE XLEXJ
SURGEONS CALL
"TRANSMUTATION"



WHILE HIS MIND IS
ON A JOURNEY TO
THE DEEP SELF.



HE IS SOARING FAR BEYOND THE WALLS
OF SLEEP, CONVERSING IN A SPEECH
NEVER MEANT FOR HUMAN TONGUES

I'M CONFUSED,
XLEXJ. STH'S
REAL OR AM I
DREAMING?

IT IS BOTH,
EARTHMAN...
THE IMAGES
YOU SEE MERELY
ILLUSTRATE WHAT
IS OCCURRING IN
YOUR BRAIN ON
THE CHEMICAL
LEVEL.



THE FACES ON
THESE FIGUREHEADS
LOOK SO
FAMILIAR!

THIS IS
THE REALM
OF YOUR
**IMMORTAL
NATURE
EARTHMAN!**

THESE
ARE YOUR
**PAST
LIVES!**



THE ONE YOU
ARE DIVING
TOWARD-- IT
HAS **MY FACE!**
AM I **DEAD**
THEN...?

NO, EARTH-
MAN-- BUT
AS YOU WILL
SEE WHEN YOU
AWAKEN..

..THIS
FACE IS
A THING
OF THE
PAST!



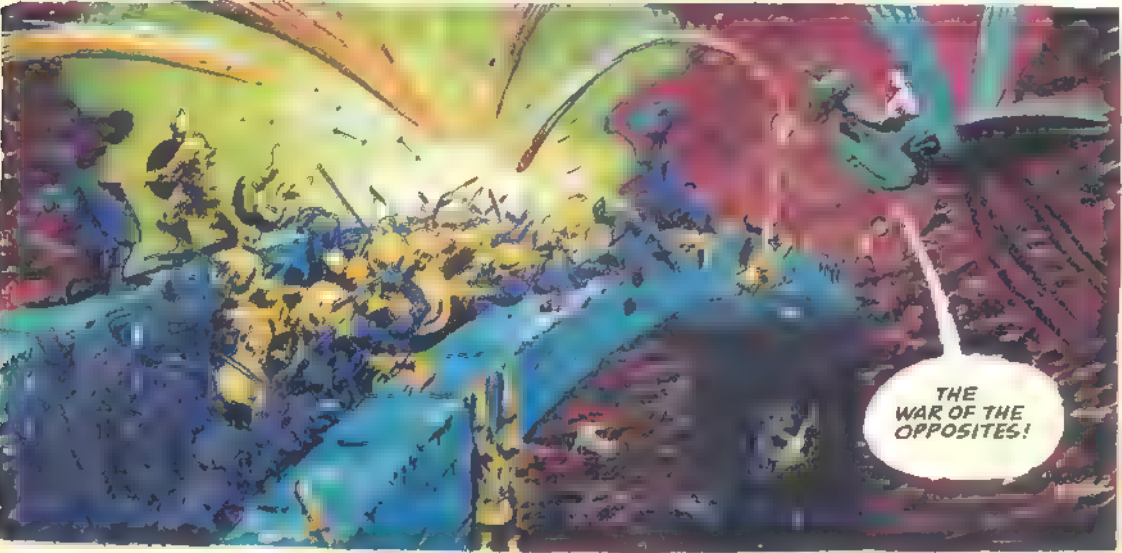
NOTICE THE **FISSURES** RUNNING
THROUGH THE FOREHEAD OF EACH
FIGURE.. THEY REPRESENT THE
RIFT THAT EXISTS BETWEEN THE
TWO HEMISPHERES OF THE
HUMAN BRAIN..

W-WHAT
ARE YOU
GOING
TO **DO?**



I WILL **HEAL**
YOUR SPLIT,
EARTHMAN..

HERE, WHERE
THE STRUGGLE
FOR SUPREMACY
BETWEEN THE SIDES
TAKES PLACE..



THE
WAR OF THE
OPPOSITES!

I GIVE YOU
THE GIFT OF
WHOLENESS,
EARTHMAN

USE IT
WISELY!

LET
THE TWO
SPHERES BE
JOINED!

WE ARE
DRAWN TO
THE GREAT
MANTLE
AND INTO
THE CHASM
WALLS SLOWLY
NEARLY
BEING TO
CONVERGE!

RUMBLE CRUMBLE KRUNCH!



THE YORR KKE HAS LEFT SATURN
FAR BEHIND WHEN THE DREAMER
FINALLY WAKES

OOOOH

AND MILLIONS OF MILES FROM
HIS HOME PLANET

JHNNNG

AN EARTHMAN IS REBORN!

AAAARRGH!

HE TEARS THE
BIRTH SAC AWAY
FROM HIS MOUTH.

IN THE DREAMS
THE XLEJU SAID
HE'D RESTRUCTURED
MY LUNGS.

BUT
I STILL
NEED
AIR!

STRIPPING THE GAUZE FROM HIS EYES
HE BEHOLDS A NEW SPECTRUM!

MY GOD!
IT'S BEYOND
BELIEF!

INFRARED,
ULTRA-VIOLET,
RADIO WAVES,
I CAN SEE THEM
ALL--AND
MORE!

REMOVING THE NETTING
THAT REMAINS HE RESSES
INSTADLY TO HIS FEET.

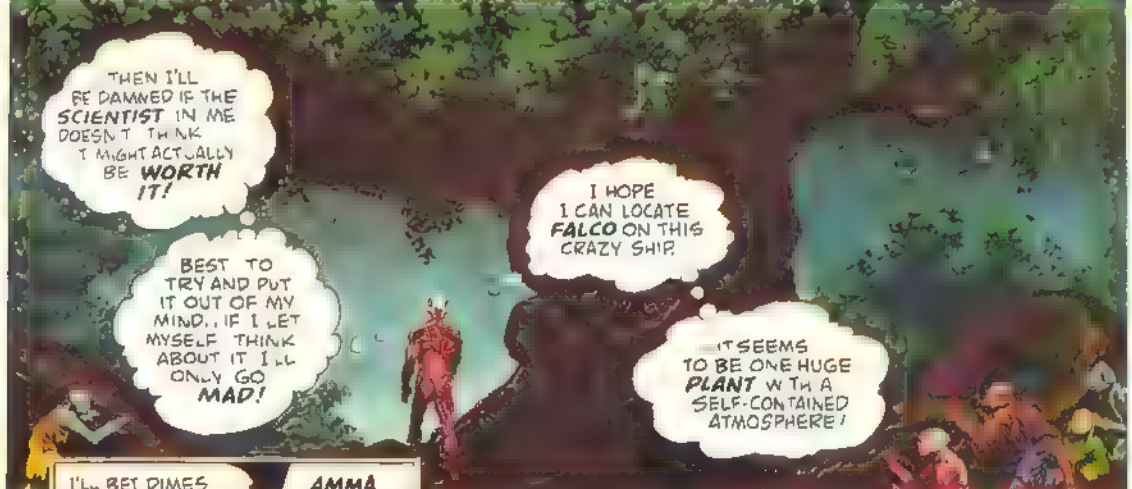
UNDER THE
BIRTH SAC SOME
SORT OF THIN
TRANSPARENT
MEMBRANE
HAS GROWN OVER
ME--REPLACING
MY HUMAN
SKIN!!

LOOK
AT ME!

T-THEY'VE
MUTATED ME
PHYSICALLY AND
SPIRITUALLY
-- INTO
WHAT?

CHOKE

STILL--
IF ONLY HALF
OF WHAT THE
XLEJU SHOWED
ME IS
TRUE...



THEN I'LL
BE DAMNED IF THE
SCIENTIST IN ME
DOESN'T THINK
I MIGHT ACTUALLY
BE **WORTH**
IT!

BEST TO
TRY AND PUT
IT OUT OF MY
MIND... IF I LET
MYSELF THINK
ABOUT IT I'LL
ONLY GO
MAD!

I HOPE
I CAN LOCATE
FALCO ON THIS
CRAZY SHIP.

IT SEEMS
TO BE ONE HUGE
PLANT WITH A
SELF-CONTAINED
ATMOSPHERE!

I'LL BET DIMITS
TO DONUTS THEY
USE SOME FORM OF
PHOTOSYNTHESIS
FOR PROPULSION...

HUH?

AMMA
COMMANDS
--BRING
FORTH THE
INITIATE!!



INITIATE!
CAN YOU
UNDERSTAND
MY WORDS?

YES
THE KLEXU
TAUGHT ME MANY
SUCH THINGS...

WHAT
DO YOU
WANT?

AMMA, GOD
OF THE VOID,
DEMANDS THAT
THOSE WHO HAVE
NOT YET TRAVELLED
BEYOND THE SPEED
OF LIGHT, PROVE
THEMSELVES
WORTHY!

HE SO
ORDAINS
YOU MUST
STAND TRIAL
BY VACCUUM!

ISAAC ACTS INSTINCTIVELY
TO PROTECT HIMSELF

THIS IS SOME STUPID
NUT ATTEMPT TO
INTIMIDATE ME

ISAAC RAISES
HIS VOICE AND
EXPANDS RAPIDLY...

NOT UNLIKE THE RITE
OF PASSAGE I HAD TO
ENDURE THE FIRST TIME
I CROSSED THE
EQUATOR!

WITH
TERRIFYING
SPEED...

NEPTUNE'S
COURT WAS
NEVER LIKE
THIS!

EXCELLENT,
EARTHMAN
EXCELLENT

SO
THIS
IS THE
FRUIT
OF MY
ALEXUS'S
LABORS?

ROTWANG!

MY SURGEONS HANDIWORK
NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE
ME! IN FACT I WAS JUST
ADMIRING THE JOB
THEY DID ON YOUR
FRIEND...

FALCO!
WHERE
IS HE?

HE'S
FOLLOWING
HIS CAPTAIN'S
ORDERS LIKE A
GOOD
CREWMAN!

WOULD THAT
YE'D TAKE
A LESSON
FROM H.M.

DON'T TAUNT ME,
ROTWANG! I'LL
NEVER SERVE
UNDER A KILLER
LIKE YOU!

YOU
MURDERED
OVER A
HUNDRED
GOOD MEN
WHEN YOU
SHANGHAIED
US--

THE ONLY
DEBT I OWE
YOU IS ONE OF
VENGEANCE!



RECONS DER,
EARTHMAN...

WE NEED
YE FOR THAT
MARVELOUS
DOUBLE BRAIN
AND WHAT IT
CAN TELL
US!

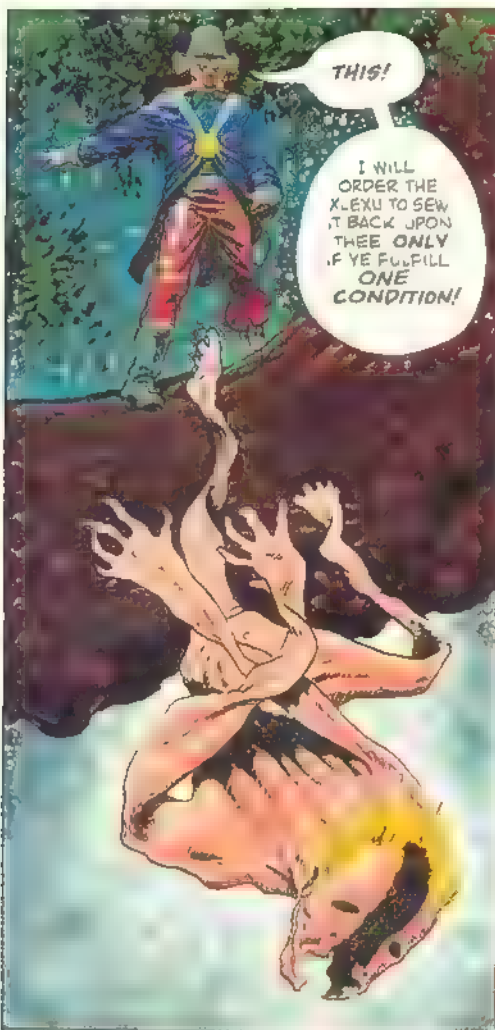
WE... I
DONT NEED
YOU!



TH NK AGA N-- THERE S
SOMETHING I POSSESS
THAT YE ARE SADLY
LACKING IN...

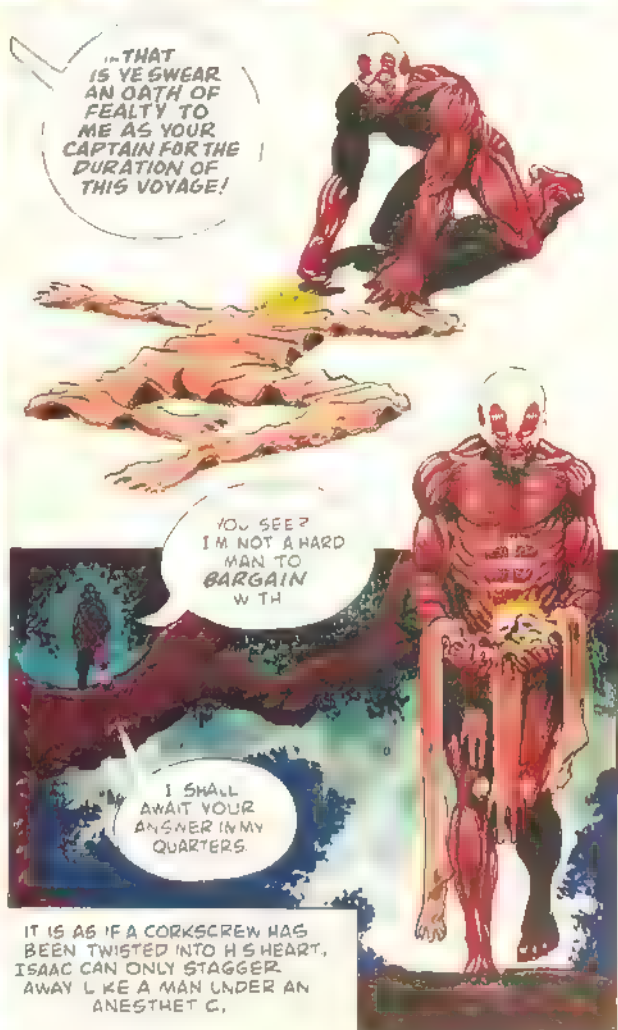
SOMETHING I
SUSPECT YE DESIRE
VERY MUCH!

OH YEAH?
WHAT
IS IT?



THIS!

I WILL
ORDER THE
X-LEXU TO SEW
IT BACK UPON
THEE ONLY
IF YE FULFILL
ONE
CONDITION!



THAT
IS YE SWEAR
AN OATH OF
FEALTY TO
ME AS YOUR
CAPTAIN FOR THE
DURATION OF
THIS VOYAGE!

YOU SEE?
I'M NOT A HARD
MAN TO
BARGAIN
WITH

I SHALL
AWAIT YOUR
ANSWER IN MY
QUARTERS

IT IS AS IF A CORKSCREW HAS
BEEN TWISTED INTO HIS HEART.
ISAAC CAN ONLY STAGGER
AWAY LIKE A MAN UNDER AN
ANESTHETIC,

HE REACHES OUT FOR
THE ONLY **OTHER**
EARTHMAN ABOARD
THE YORR KKE ...

FALCO..

HIS ENHANCED SENSES
LEAD HIM FURTHER AND
FURTHER INTO THE
DEEPEST CREVASSES
OF THE SHIP...

FINALLY HE IS DRAWN TO THE CHAMBER
CONTAINING THE **GRAVITY ROOT**, AND
THE BOLERS USED TO CONTROL IT

FALCO. ?

IT IS HERE HE LEARNS THE
TRUE MEANING OF **GRIEF...**

P-FALCO.

WAVES OF DESPAIR ROLL IN,
SUBMERGING HIM UNDER A
DEAD SEA OF DESOLATION.

A **FAMILIAR SONG**
THAT VIBRATES ALONG
THE TUNING FORK OF
HIS SOUL.

YES..
YES!

FOR THE YORRIKKE IS APPROACHING
THE **WHALE PLANET...**

I--I
HEAR
YOU!

AND THE
SYMPHONY OF
THE WHALES IS
BECOMING
INCREASINGLY
CLEAR!

WHEN SUDDENLY HE
HEARS THE **SONG!**

ABRAXAS AND THE EARTHMAN continues next issue.

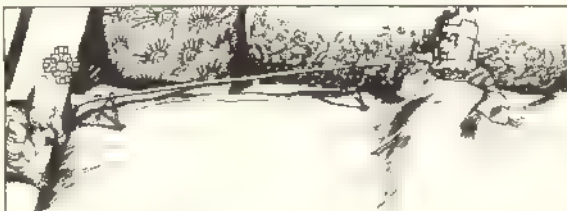
AN IMPERIAL MESSAGE

by Franz Kafka

adaptation by Leopoldo Duranona

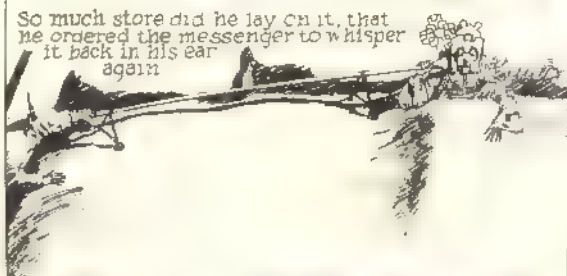
The Emperor has sent a message to you, the humble subject, the insignificant shadow cowering in the remotest distance from the Imperial sun.

The Emperor, from his deathbed, has sent a message to you alone.



He has commanded the messenger to kneel down by the bed and whispered the message to him.

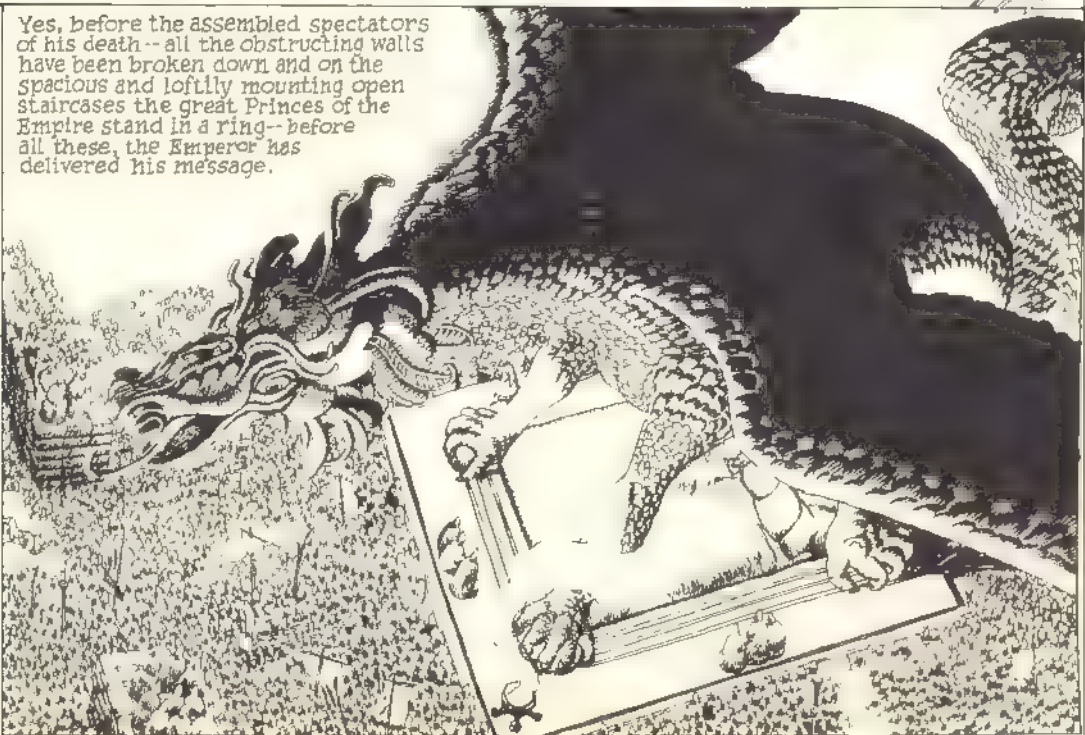
So much store did he lay on it, that he ordered the messenger to whisper it back in his ear again.



Then, by a nod of the head, he has confirmed that it is right.



Yes, before the assembled spectators of his death--all the obstructing walls have been broken down and on the spacious and loftily mounting open staircases the great Princes of the Empire stand in a ring--before all these, the Emperor has delivered his message.



The messenger immediately sets out on his journey. A powerful, indefatigable man. Now pushing with his right arm, now with his left, he cleaves a path for himself through the throng.



If he encounters resistance, he points to his breast to where the symbol of the sun glitters. So the way is made easier for him than it would be for any other man.

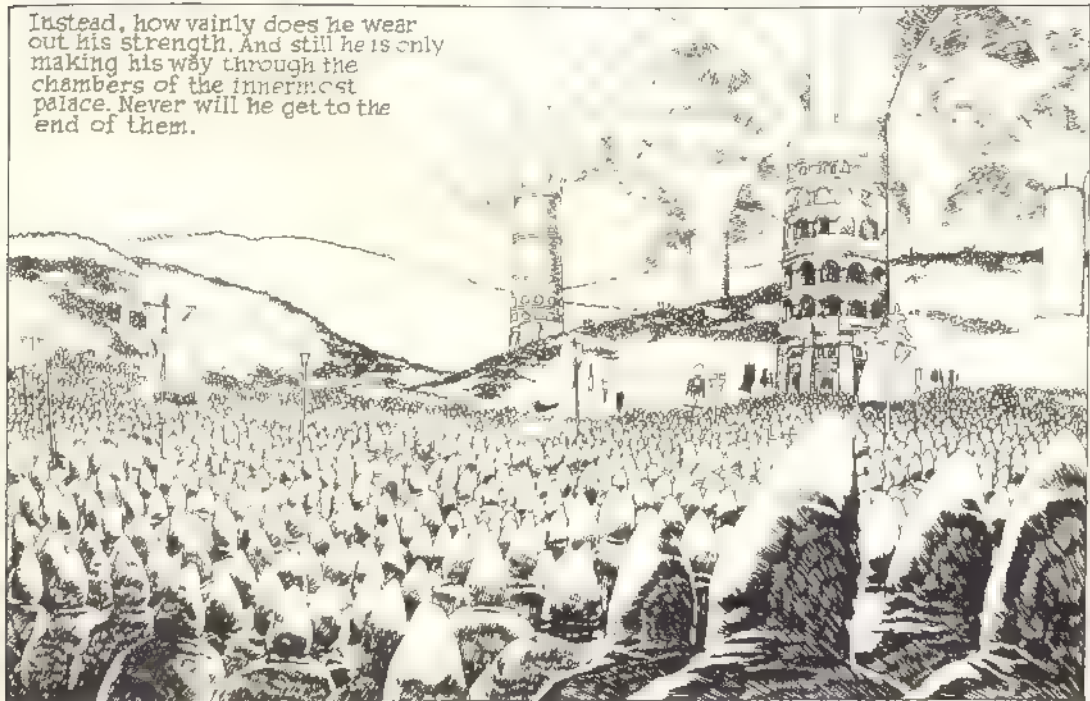


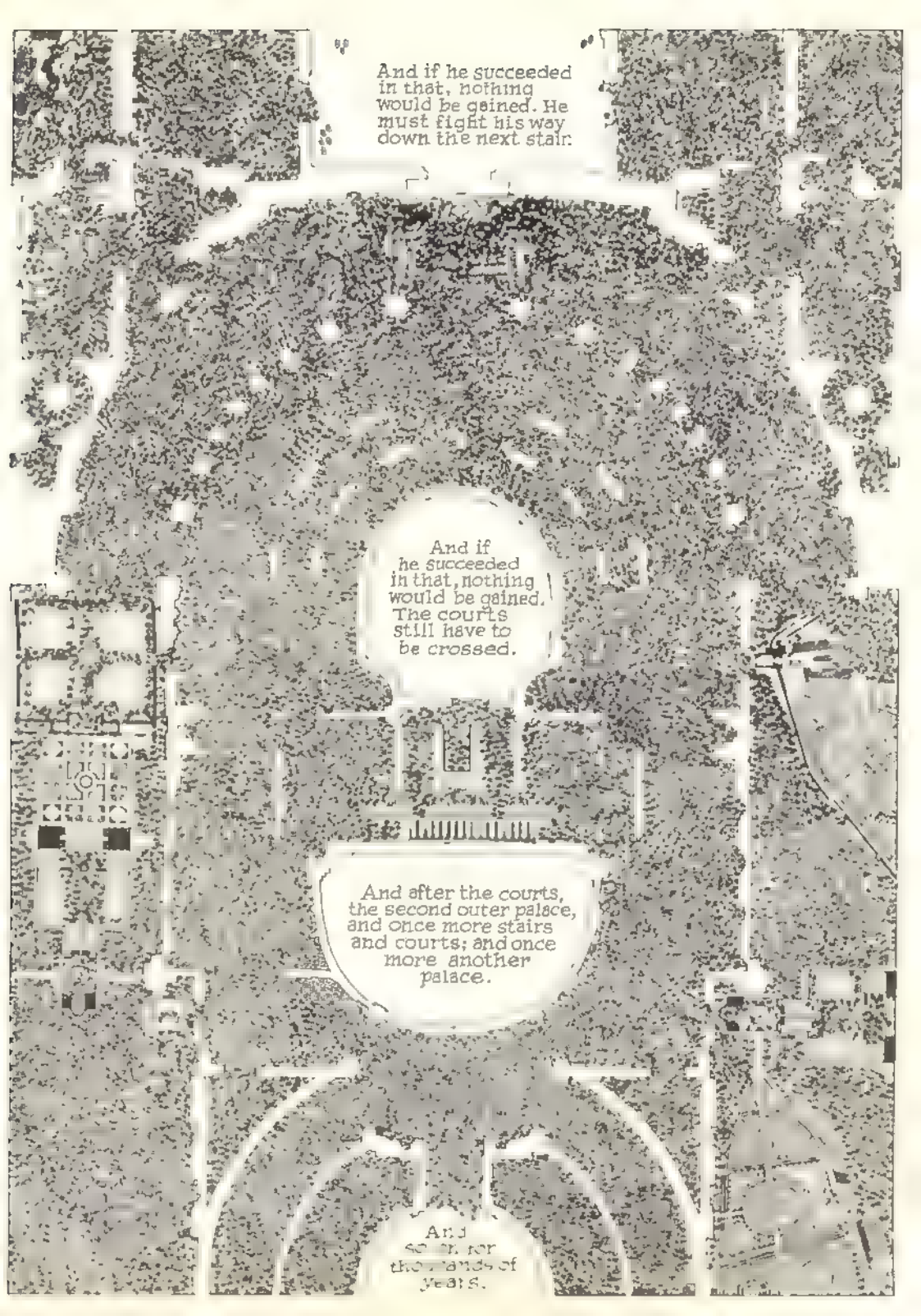
But the multitudes are so vast; their numbers have no end. If he could reach the open fields, how fast he would fly.



Doubtlessly, you would soon hear the welcome hammering of his fists on your door.

Instead, how vainly does he wear out his strength. And still he is only making his way through the chambers of the innermost palace. Never will he get to the end of them.



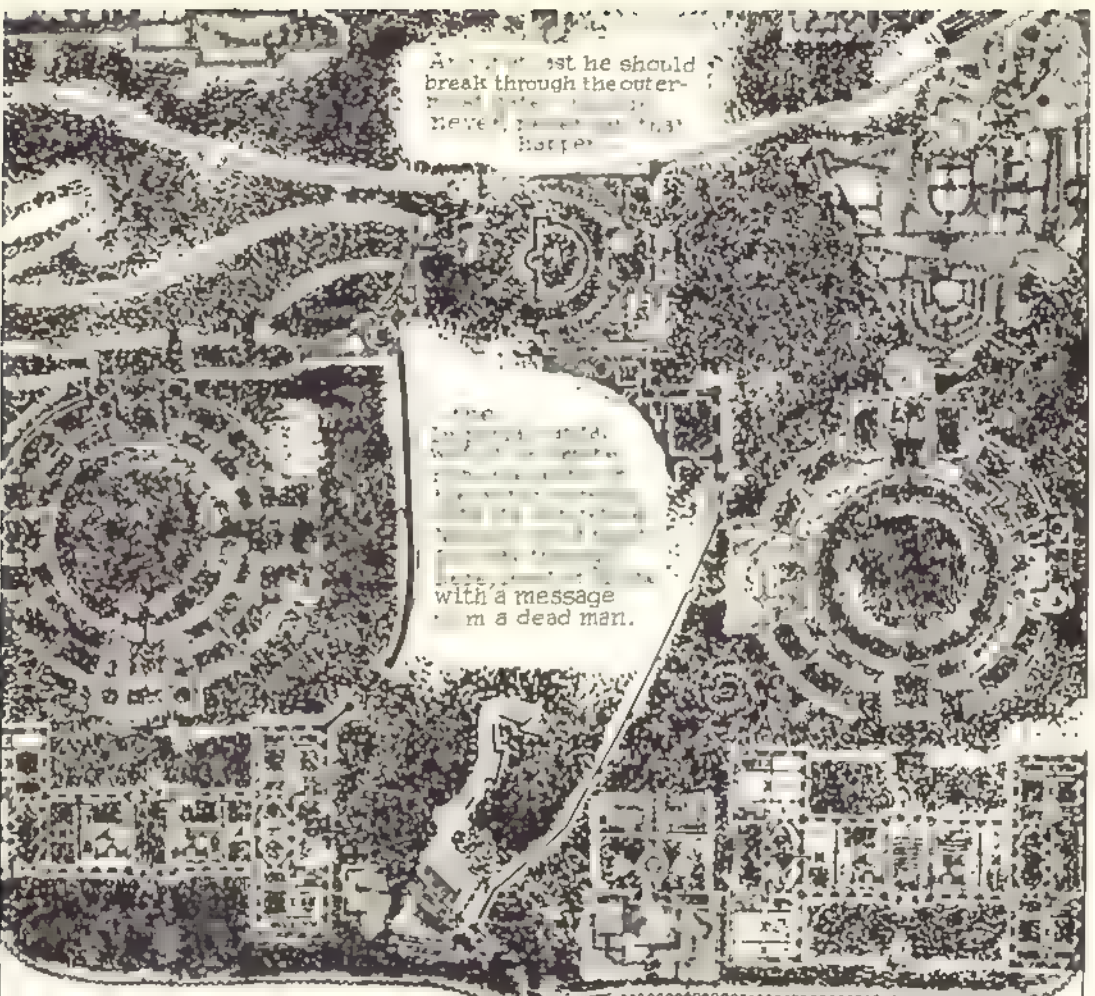


And if he succeeded
in that, nothing
would be gained. He
must fight his way
down the next stair.

And if
he succeeded
in that, nothing
would be gained.
The courts
still have to
be crossed.

And after the courts,
the second outer palace,
and once more stairs
and courts; and once
more another
palace.

And
so on for
thousands of
years.

An aerial, high-contrast black and white photograph of a city, likely New Orleans, showing the Mississippi River and surrounding urban areas. A large, white, irregular speech bubble is superimposed over the center of the image.

At least he should
break through the outer-
most barrier.
Never before.

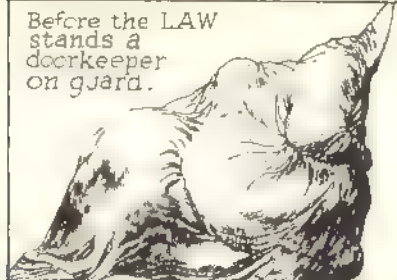
with a message
in a dead man.

A black and white photograph showing the back of a person's head and shoulders as they look out of a window. The window has a decorative metal grille. Outside, a city skyline is visible under a dark sky.

When evening
falls...and dream
it to yourself.

BEFORE THE LAW by Franz Kafka. Adaptation by Leo Duranona

Before the LAW stands a doorkeeper on guard.



To this doorkeeper there comes a man from the country who begs for admittance to the LAW.



I CANNOT GRANT YOU ADMITTANCE AT THE MOMENT.

WILL I BE ALLOWED, THEN, TO ENTER LATER?



IT IS POSSIBLE, BUT NOT AT THE MOMENT.

Since the gateway stands open as usual and the doorkeeper steps to one side.



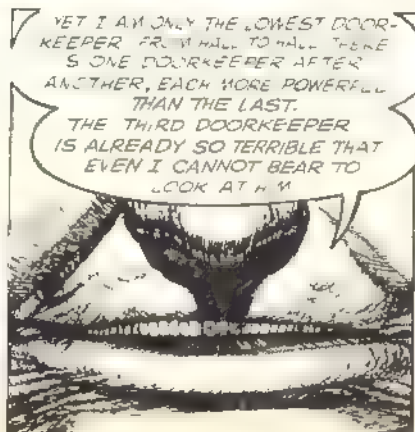
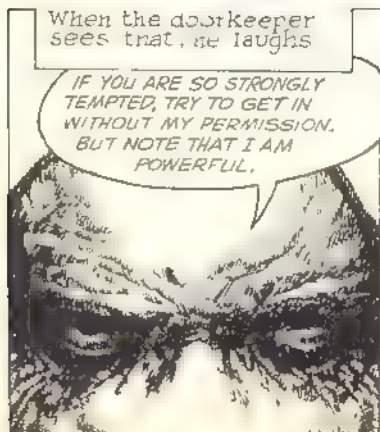
...the man bends down to peer through the entrance.

When the doorkeeper sees that, he laughs

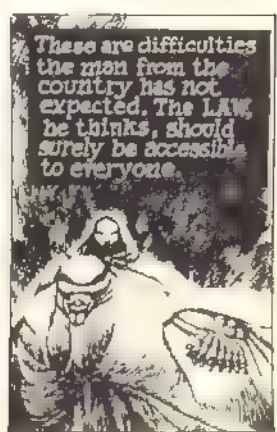
IF YOU ARE SO STRONGLY TEMPTED, TRY TO GET IN WITHOUT MY PERMISSION. BUT NOTE THAT I AM POWERFUL.

YET I AM ONLY THE LOWEST DOORKEEPER. FROM HILL TO HILL THERE IS ONE DOORKEEPER AFTER ANOTHER, EACH MORE POWERFUL THAN THE LAST.

THE THIRD DOORKEEPER IS ALREADY SO TERRIBLE THAT EVEN I CANNOT BEAR TO LOOK AT HIM.



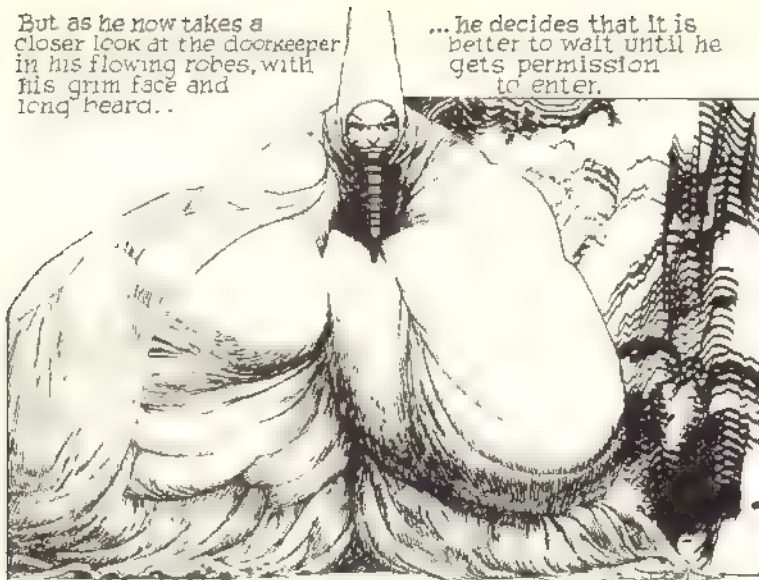
These are difficulties the man from the country has not expected. The LAW, he thinks, should surely be accessible to everyone.



But as he now takes a closer look at the doorkeeper in his flowing robes, with his grim face and long beard...

... he decides that it is better to wait until he gets permission to enter.

The doorkeeper gives him a stool and lets him sit down at the side of the door.



There he sits waiting for days and years.



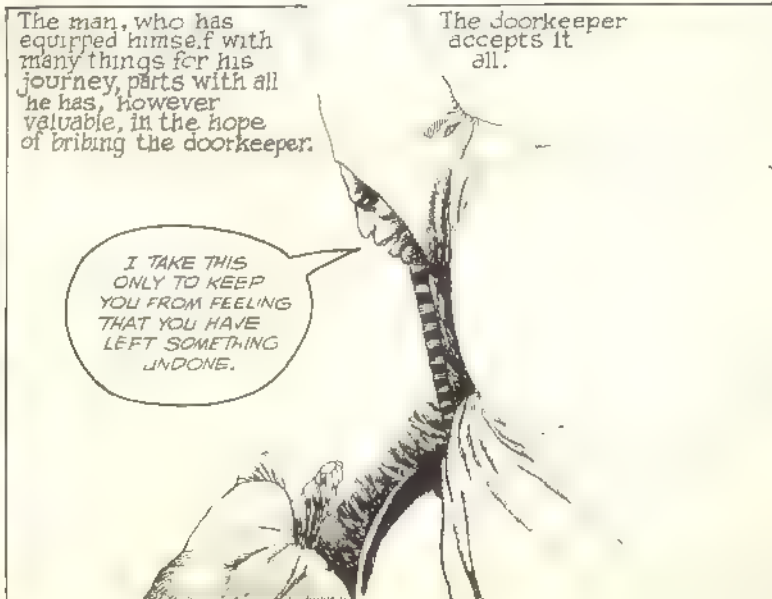
He makes many attempts to be admitted and wears the doorkeeper with his impotency.

The man, who has equipped himself with many things for his journey, parts with all he has, however valuable, in the hope of bribing the doorkeeper.

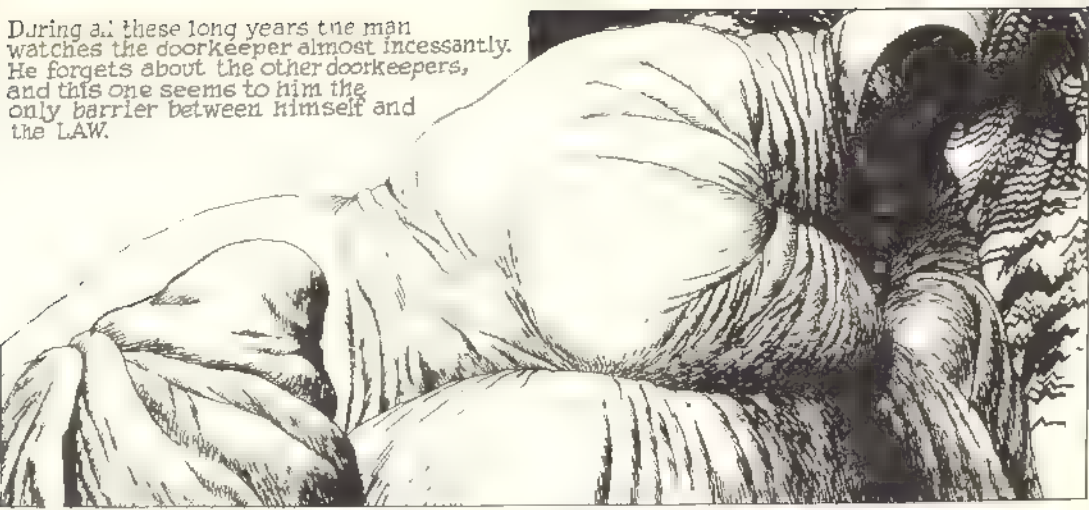
The doorkeeper accepts it all.



I TAKE THIS ONLY TO KEEP YOU FROM FEELING THAT YOU HAVE LEFT SOMETHING UNDONE.



During all these long years the man watches the doorkeeper almost incessantly. He forgets about the other doorkeepers, and this one seems to him the only barrier between himself and the LAW.



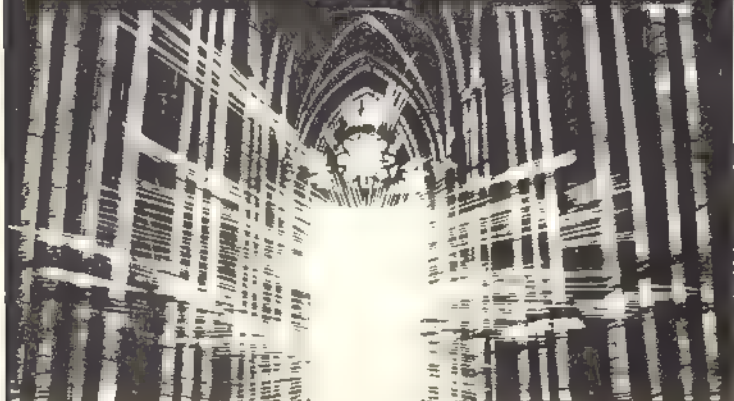
In the early years, he curses his evil fate loudly and loudly. Later, as he grows old, he mutters only to himself.



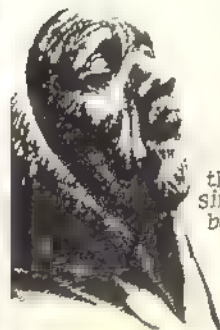
He grows childish, and since in his prolonged watch he has learned to know even the fleas in the doorkeeper's collar, he begs the very fleas to help him persuade the doorkeeper to change his mind.



Finally his eyes grow dim and he does not know whether the world is darkening around him or his eyes are only deceiving him. But in the darkness, he can now perceive a radiance that streams immortally from the door of the LAW.



Now his life is drawing to a close. Before he dies, at that he has experienced during his long sojourn. Condenses in his mind to one question.



He beckons to the doorkeeper since he can barely raise his aged body.



The doorkeeper has to bend low to hear, for the difference in size between them has increased very much to the man's disadvantage.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW NOW? YOU ARE INSATIABLE!

EVERYONE STRIVES TO REACH THE LAW. HOW DOES IT HAPPEN, THEN, THAT ALL THESE YEARS, NO ONE BUT ME HAS EVER BEGGED FOR ADMITTANCE?



The doorkeeper realizes that the man has reached his end, and so, to allow his falling senses to catch the answer, roars in his ear.

NO ONE ELSE COULD EVER BE ADMITTED HERE. THIS GATE WAS INTENDED SOLELY FOR YOU! AND NOW...



...I AM GOING TO SHUT IT!

PART 2

JOURNEY TO SKYHOOK MOUNTAIN

WELL THERE IT
IS--SEE HOW THE
VERY TOP HOOKS OVER?
THAT *PROVES* IT'S
SKYHOOK
MOUNTAIN.

AND IT'S ABOUT TIME!
WE'VE BEEN RIDING FOR
DAYS THROUGH SWAMPS
AND JUNGLES AND DESERTS--
AND ALL TO REACH A STUPID,
SKINNY PILE OF ROCK!

FASY VELANNA
NO NEED TO *SWAP* AT
MUD-BUTT BESIDES
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO
WANTED TO LEAVE
TREEHAVEN AND GO
ON THIS JOURNEY...

THAT'S RIGHT
SISTER--SKYHOOK
MOUNTAIN MAY NOT
LOOK LIKE MUCH
BUT JUST BEAR ONE
THOUGHT IN THAT
SAUCY ELF HEAD
OF YOURS

IT COULD HOLD
THE ONLY SALVATION
THAT'LL KEEP WERD-
WORLD FROM BEING
SWALLOWED WHOLE
BY EVIL!



OH? AND YOU JUST BEAR *THIS* THOUGHT
IN THAT THICK DWARF HEAD OF *YOURS*.
MJD:BJTT

WAGGLE YER TONGUE AND DROOL
VENOM ALL YA WANT SISTER BUT
I'M TELLIN YA THERE'S A *BIG*
EVIL ON THE LAND!

I SAW *PLENTY* OF IT
ON MY WAY TO TREEHAVEN--
LAKES BOILIN, ROCKS
RAININ FROM THE SKY
MOTHERS TOSSIN' THEIR
BABES INTO COOKPOTS

THE ONLY EVIL
I'VE EXPERIENCED
SO FAR HAS BEEN
SHARING THIS "JOURNEY"
WITH YOU AND PATHETIC
TYNDALL!

WE SAW SOME OF IT TOO,
'LANNA - DON'T FORGET
THAT *DRAGON ATTACK*
JUST BEFORE WE LEFT
TREEHAVEN...

HAH! SOME EVIL--IF EVEN YOU
COULD STOP IT BY CROONING
A STUPID SONG!

NOW IF
YOU'LL EXCUSE
ME I FEEL AN
URGENT NEED
TO BE ANYWHERE
BUT IN THE
COMPANY OF TWO
NAIVE DAFS!

VELANNA!

AW, LET HER GO, TYNDALL--
A FASTER PACE WON'T HURT
US OR THE CLOPPERS.

WE GOTTA GET TO THE WIZARD OF
SKYHOOK MOUNTAIN FAST ANYWAY--AND
COVER N' MORE GROUND BEFORE THE
CAMPFIRE AIN'T A BAD DEAD

BUT SHE'S SO *DIFFERENT*
NOW MJD BUTT SO SHORT
TEMPERED .

I SWEAR SHE'S
FORGOTTEN HOW
TO *SMILE*!

"SHE'S CERTAINLY NOT THE SAME ELF I FIRST FOUND AT THE HEART OF THAT BEACHED RIGEN."



"SHE WAS SO FRESH, SO INNOCENT."

"... AND IT WAS SO MUCH BETTER THEN, FOR BOTH OF US. THE MAGIC WAS GOOD. THE BLUE SOUL OF EVERY FREELE AND THE RED KISS OF EVERY SUNSET. AND WE SMILED ALL THE TIME."



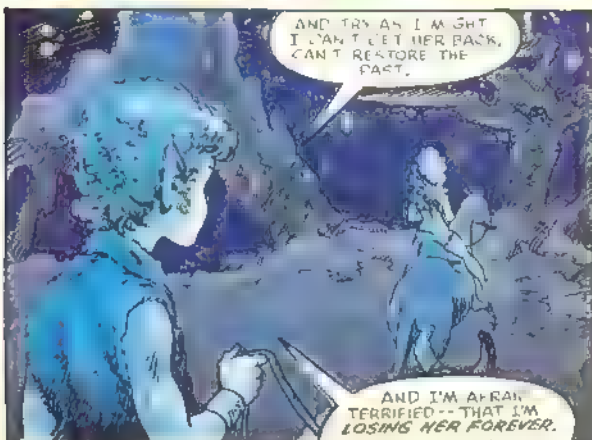
"WE WERE JUST SO GLAD TO BE ALIVE TOGETHER."

"EVEN WHEN WE CAME UPON THE HEAVEN AFTER ALL THE BAD TIMES AND DECIDED TO LIVE THERE BECAUSE IT WAS CLOSE TO FLOATING HEAVEN. EVEN THEN THERE WERE TRACES OF THE GOOD MAN."



"EVEN THEN WE SMILED AT LEAST SOME OF THE TIME."

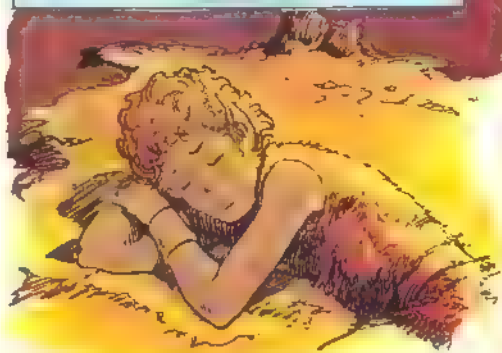
"BUT JUST BEFORE YOU RETURNED ME, PUTT SHE BEGAN TO CHANGE. BECAME COLD AND HAPPY TO BE ALIVE WITH EVERYTHING."



"AND TRY AS I MIGHT I CAN'T GET HER BACK, CAN'T RESTORE THE PAST."

"AND I'M AFRAID TERRIFIED-- THAT I'M LOSING HER FOREVER."

"AND THAT NIGHT'S FITFUL SLEEP DOES NOTHING TO DISPEL TYNDALL'S FEARS. INDEED, HE STARTS AWAKE EVERY FEW MOMENTS, PRICKED BY NIGHTMARES OF CRUEL REJECTION AND ETERNAL LOVE LIES."

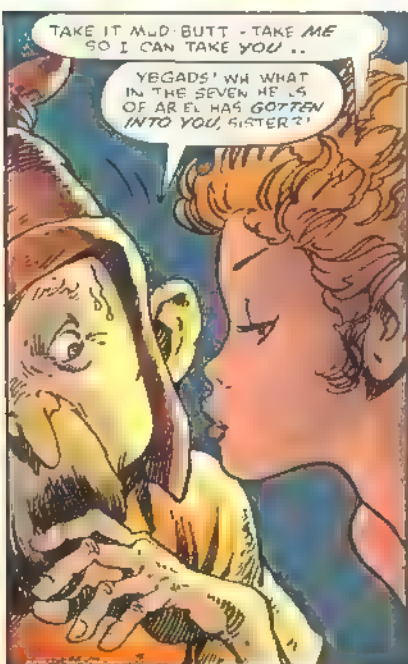


AND EACH TIME HE AWAKENS THE REALITY IS WORSE, FOR THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM HAS BECOME A BRIDGELESS



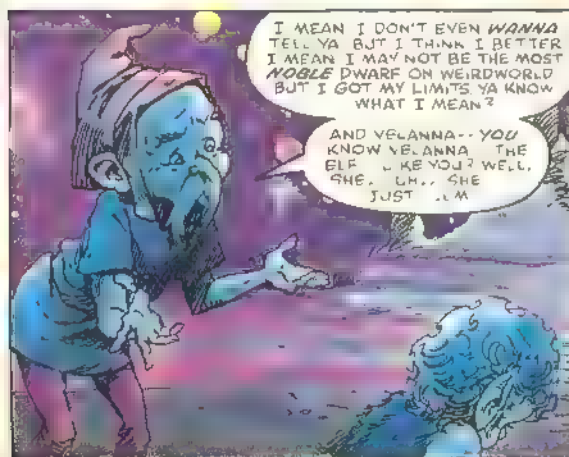
EH? WHAT'S SHE DOING??

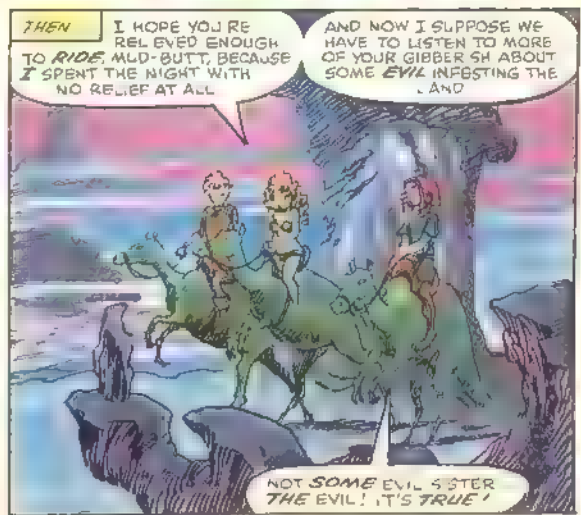
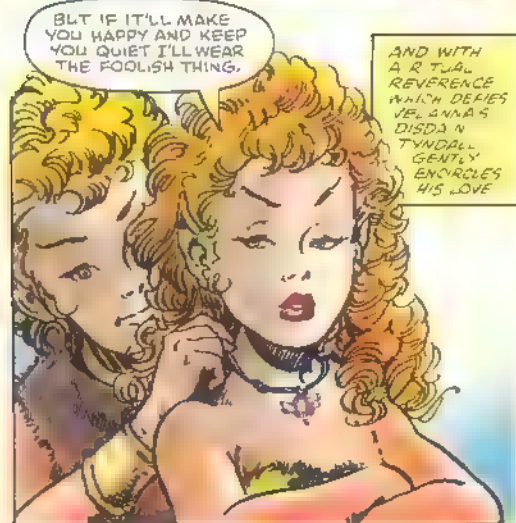
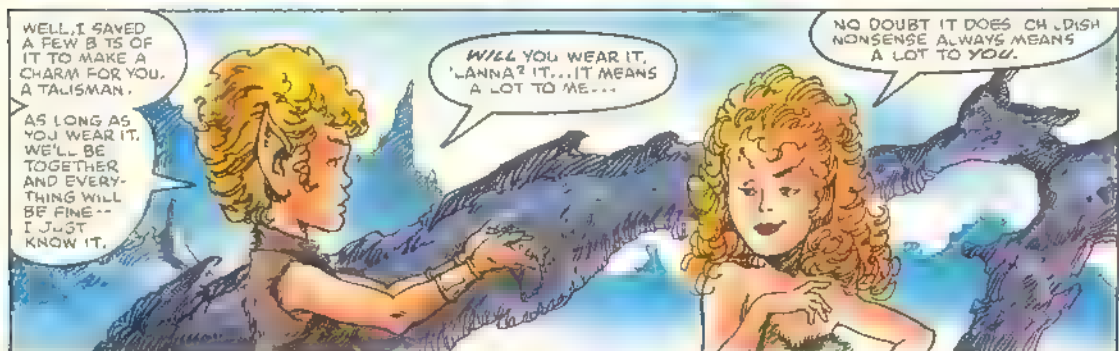
WAKE UP MUD BUTT AREN'T YOU COLD? DON'T YOU WANT ME TO WARM YOU UP?





AT ANY OTHER TIME THOSE WOULD BE FIGHTING WORDS - BUT
NOW, GRIEVOUSLY UNNERVED MUD BUTT HOTFOOTS IT TO THE
RIVER BE..OWING ALL THE WAY

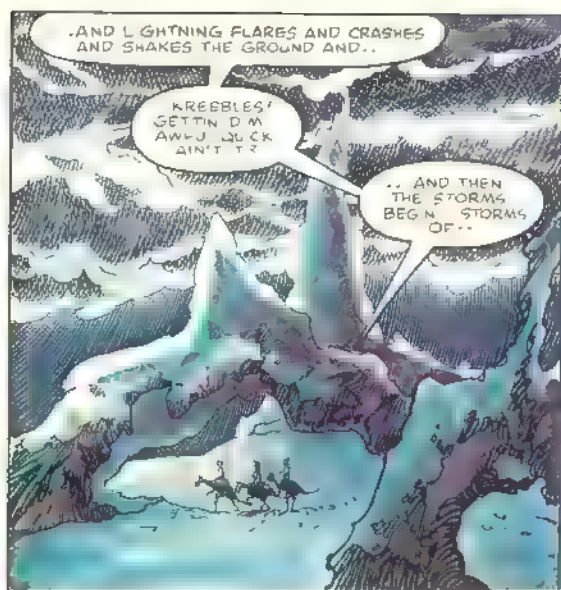






ALL KINDS OF NONSENSICAL DASTARDS HAVE BEEN HAPPENING--AS NATURE HERSELF HAS DECIDED TO TRESS IN DARKNESS

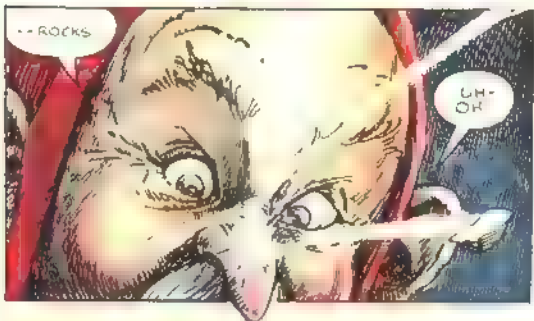
IT HAPPENS LIKE THE OLD DAYS CATCHER SUDDENLY WITHOUT WARNING



..AND LIGHTNING FLARES AND CRASHES AND SHAKES THE GROUND AND..

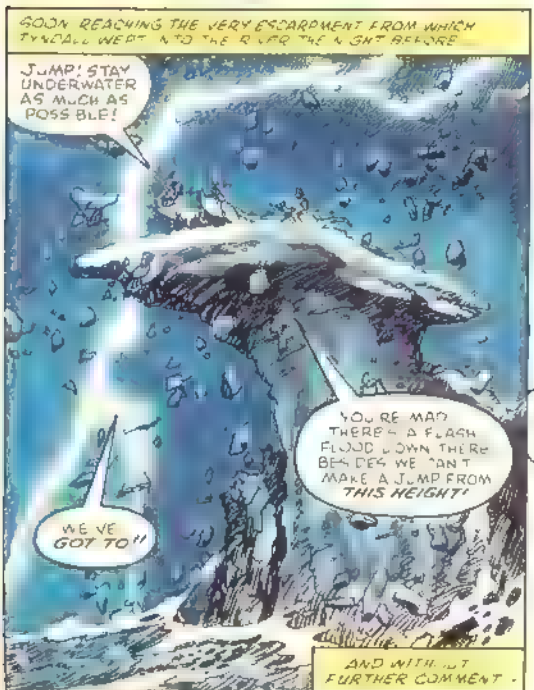
KREBBLES! GETTIN' D'M AWAY JUCK AIN'T IT?

.. AND THEN THE STORMS BEGIN STORMS OF..



..ROCKS

UH- OH



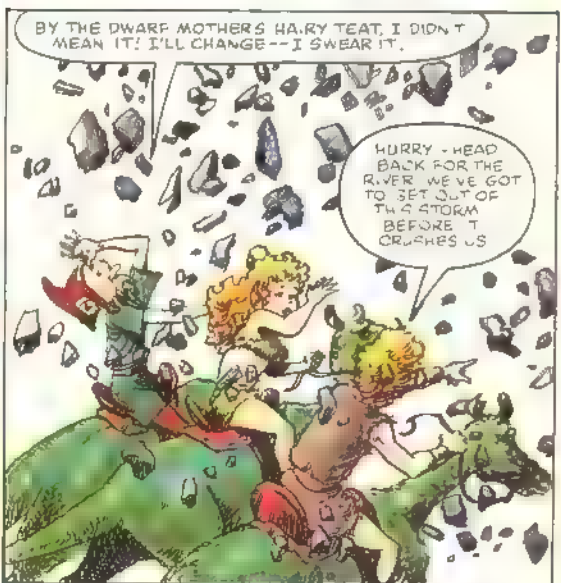
SOON REACHING THE VERY ESCARPMENT FROM WHICH TYNCALL WENT INTO THE RIVER THE NIGHT BEFORE

JUMP! STAY UNDERWATER AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!

WE'VE GOT TO!!

YOU'RE MAD! THERE'S A FLASH FLOOD DOWN THERE BECAUSE WE CAN'T MAKE A JUMP FROM THIS HEIGHT!

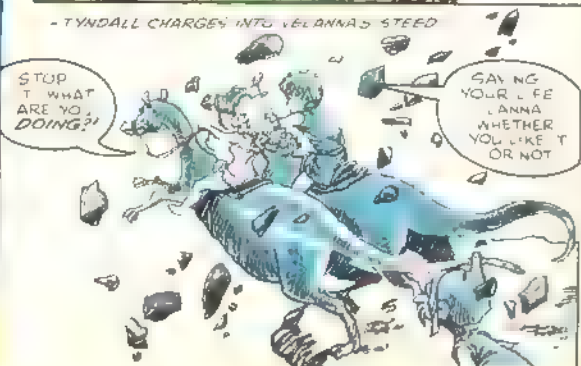
AND WITHOUT FURTHER COMMENT..



BY THE DWARF MOTHERS HARRY TEAT, I DIDN'T MEAN IT! I'LL CHANGE--I SWEAR IT.

HURRY--HEAD BACK FOR THE RIVER. WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS STORM BEFORE IT CRUSHES US

-TYNDALL CHARGES INTO VELANNA'S STEED



STOP! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

SAYING YOUR LIFE LAYING WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT

COME ON
MUD BUTT!

WHOOAAA! LOOK
OUT BELOW!

THEY PLUNGE
4 TO THE 4
EPA. CARRY
FRIGID WATERS
SOAK AT LAST
FROM THE
DETECTORY
OF ROCKS

... BUT CAUGHT IN THE
FLOODING RIVER'S
PRETERNATURALLY
SNIT FURACE

IT RIPS THEM ALONG — EMBLING OVER JAGGED ROCKS
AND GUSHING FALLS THROUGH SUBMERGED TUNNELS AND
ROTTOES UNTIL THEY FEEL DROWNED A DOZEN TIMES

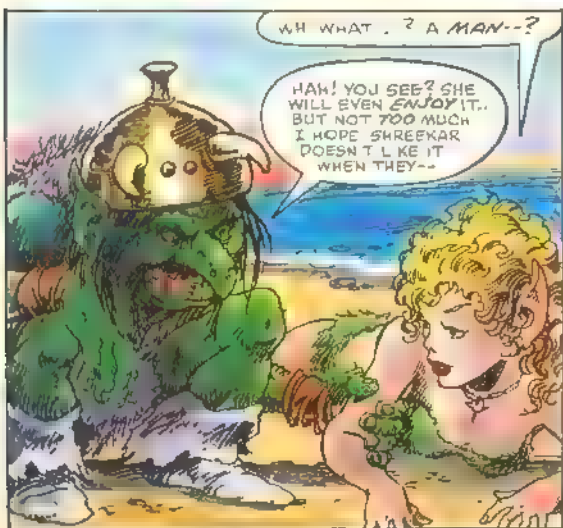
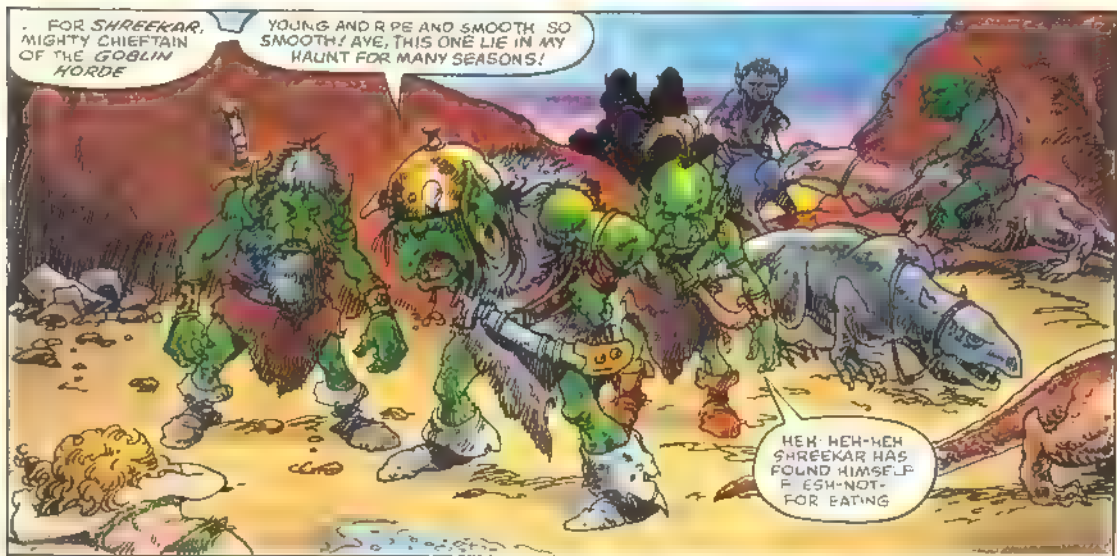
BUT ALWAYS SEEMING-
LY AT THE LAST POSSIBLE
SECOND THEY MANAGE TO
BREAK THE SURFACE FOR
ANOTHER LITTLE SAVING
GASP OF AIR. AND SO IT
GOES THROUGHOUT THE
ENTIRE ENDLESS DAY.

UNTIL DIZZY BONE-
WEARY AND SPENT THEY
ARE FINALLY SET UPON
A ROCKY SHORE

AT AT LEAST
THE ROCK STORM'S
OVER TWIT

...AND THE FLOOD WASHED US CLOSER TO SKYHOOK MOUNTAIN
GOOD THING TOO. CUZ WE LOST OUR CLOPPER STEEDS

DIDN'T TALK
MUD BUTT JUST
RESSST





HEY WHAT ARE YOU--?

HAH! I'LL TAKE THIS SWORD BRUTE

MMMPH!



JUST STAY BEH ND ME, VELANNA

I DON'T CARE HOW MANY THERE ARE - I'LL DEFEND YOU FROM EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM R GHT JP TO MY DYING BREATH!

BUT AS THE REETH NG GOBLINS GATHER AND SLOWLY CONVERGE EVEN VALANT TYNDAL CAN SEE THE HOPELESSNESS OF HIS CAUSE



THE TW T'S DONE IT AGAIN-- AND HERE I'M SPOSED TO BE THE ONE WHO PICKS ALL THE FIGHTS!

THE POWER ROD-- WHERE'S THE POWER-ROD?! GOTTA FIND IT

--BEFORE HE GETS OUR BONES TOSSED IN SOME REEKING GOBLIN STEW!

AN ELF-SO-SMALL NO LESS! NOT EVEN A DWARF! AN ELF-- ATTACKING ME-- ATTACK NG SHREEKAR, CHIEFTAIN OF THE GOBLIN HORDE!

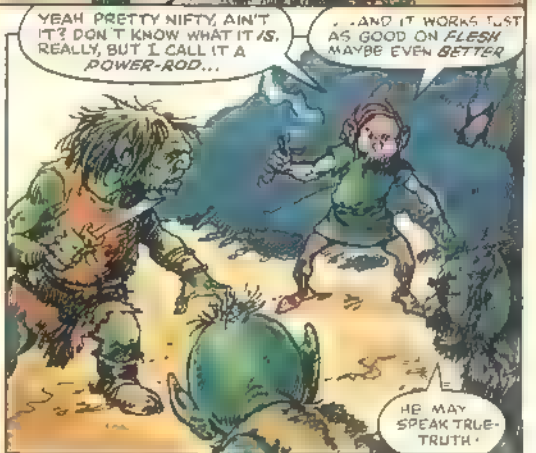
RJE YOUR ACT ONG PITEJUL ELF-SO SMALL FOR NOW YOU FACE DEATH-DEATH!



AHA! I KNEW I'D TUCKED THE THING AWAY SOMEWHERE!

ZOOSH! ZOOSH! ZOOSH! ZOOSH!

OUR BLADES SMASH-SHATTER



YEAH PRETTY NIFTY, AIN'T IT? DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS. REALLY, BUT I CALL IT A POWER-ROD...

...AND IT WORKS JUST AS GOOD ON FLESH MAYBE EVEN BETTER

HE MAY SPEAK TRUE-TRUTH!

YOU BET I SPEAK TRUTH,
YA MUDGLY GOBLIN-CREEPS

NOW JUST STAY WHERE YA ARE--
WHILE WE SWEEP A COUPLE OF
YOUR RIDICULOUS STEEDS TO
GET US OUTTA HERE!

THE GOBLIN WHEN SHREEKAR MET BUTT
HE WAS UNABLE TO POINT AT TWIDALLS EYES

SHREEKAR WILL
NOT FORGET THIS
DARK DAY ELF!

IN THE YEARS TO
COME I... PROBABLY
HAVE A FEW NIGHTMARES
ABOUT IT MYSELF, SHREEKAR -
BUT RIGHT NOW I JUST
WANT TO LIVE UNTIL
TONIGHT'S SLEEP

HAUGH! WHEN NEXT WE
MEET ELF, YOUR BLOOD SHALL
SPILL RED FLOW!

AFTER THEM!
CUT ESCAPE
STOP DEAD!

NOT BAD, EH TWIT' MUD BUTT AND
HIS TRUSTY POWER-ROD TO THE
RESCUE ONCE AGAIN

YEAH-- AND
THESE LIZARD-
STEEDS ARE A LOT
FASTER THAN
I EXPECTED

BUT THEY'RE
ALREADY COMING
AFTER US,
MUD BUTT!

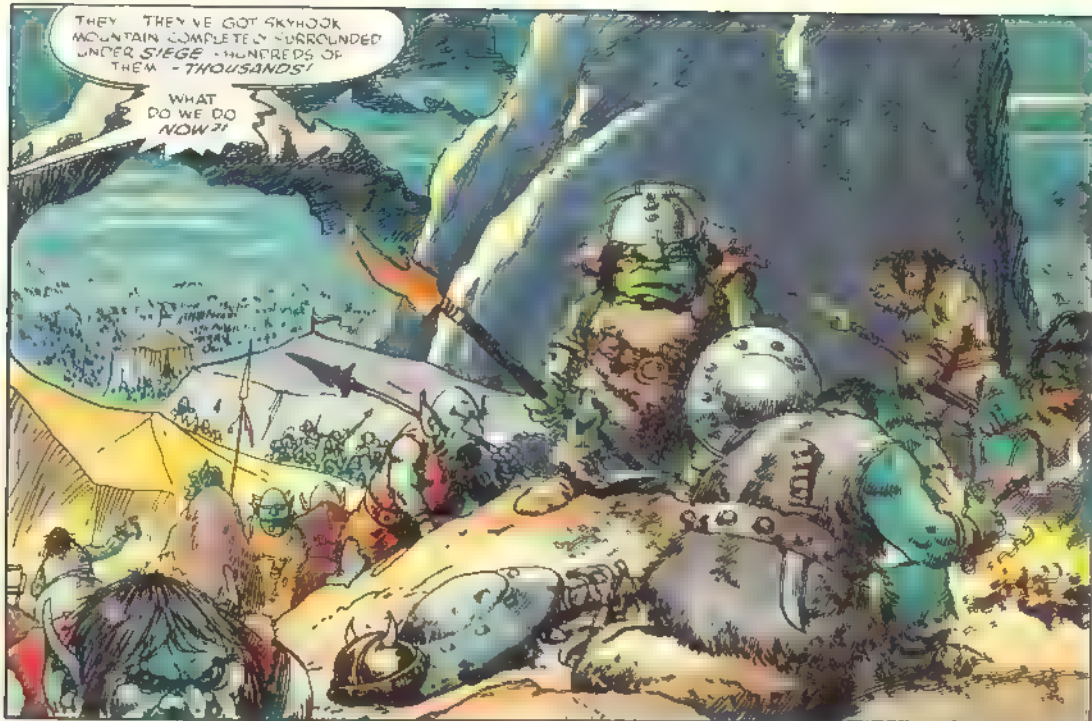
WHAT D YA
EXPECT, TWIT?
YA WANT EM TO
JUST STAND THERE
AND WAVE
GOODBYE?

-- MOUNTAIN?

OH NO--!
THERE'S MORE
OF THEM--
LOTS MORE

BUT DON'T WORRY-- WE'RE TOO CLOSE
NOW-- NO WAY THEY CAN CATCH US BEFORE
WE REACH SKYHOOK -

AND A THERELY TWIDALLS WAS NATION OR
DOES HE EVEN ACTUALLY CHASE AT THE SIGHT?



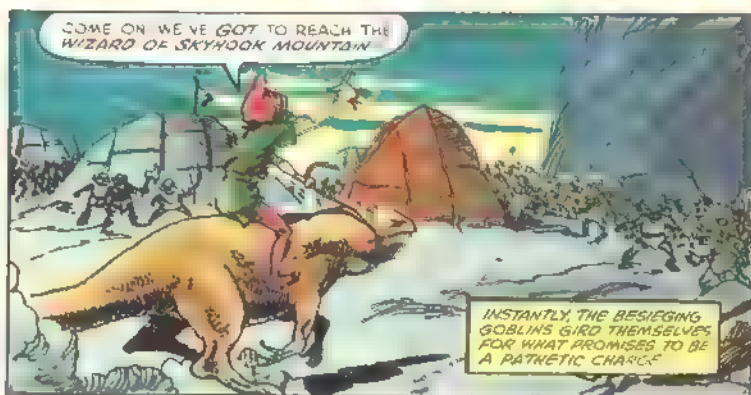
THEY THEY'VE GOT SKYHOOK MOUNTAIN COMPLETELY SURROUNDED UNDER SIEGE - HUNDREDS OF THEM - THOUSANDS!

WHAT DO WE DO NOW??



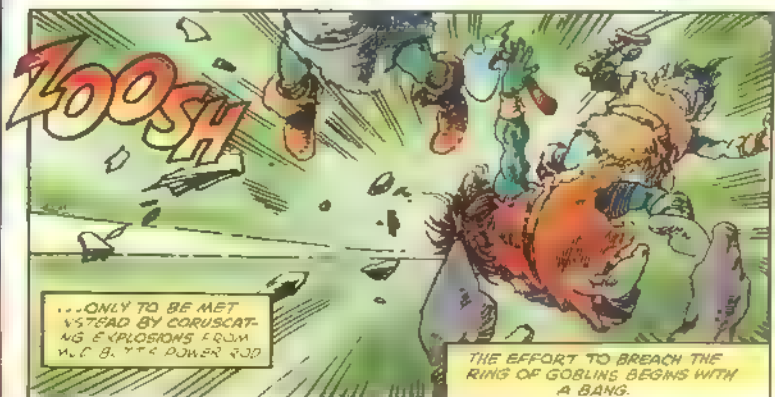
WE GOT NO CHOICE TWIT THEIR CHIEF'S COMIN' UP ON US FAST

NOTHIN TO DO BUT OUTRACE THE ONES BEHIND US AND CUT A SWATH THROUGH THE ONES IN FRONT OF US



COME ON WE'VE GOT TO REACH THE WIZARD OF SKYHOOK MOUNTAIN

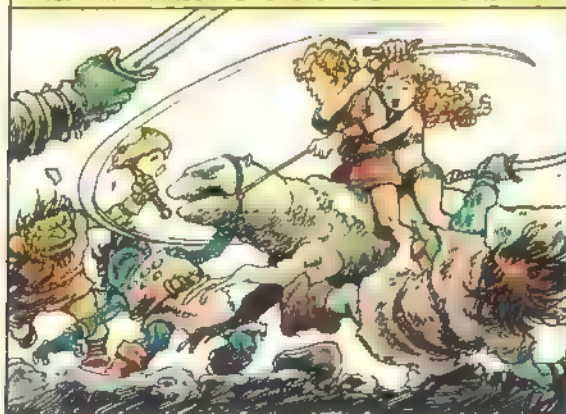
INSTANTLY, THE BESIEGING GOBLINS GIRD THEMSELVES FOR WHAT PROMISES TO BE A PATNETIC CHARGE



...ONLY TO BE MET INSTEAD BY CORUSCATING EXPLOSIONS FROM W.C.B.'S POWER ROD

THE EFFORT TO BREACH THE RING OF GOBLINS BEGINS WITH A BANG

JAY'S SHREEKAR'S SWORD TYNDALL CUTS AND GLASHES AT THOSE ATTACKERS MISSED BY MUD-BUTT & MIRACULOUS POWER-ROD. AND THOUGH GOBLINS FLY EVERYWHERE OTHERS SURGE FORWARD SEEKING TO SEAL THE GUNTLET ONCE MORE



THEN AS MUD-BUTT A MOST BREAKS CLEANLY THROUGH THE GOB. N RANKS



WHAT THE...? I'M PRESSIN THE GEM BUTT ON - BUT NOTH'S SPURTIN OUTTA THE POWER-ROD!

AH AT LAST I CAPTURE A CRUCIAL PIECE MY OPPONENT

EVEN IN YOUR LOST CAUSE IT WAS GROWING TROUBLE SOME



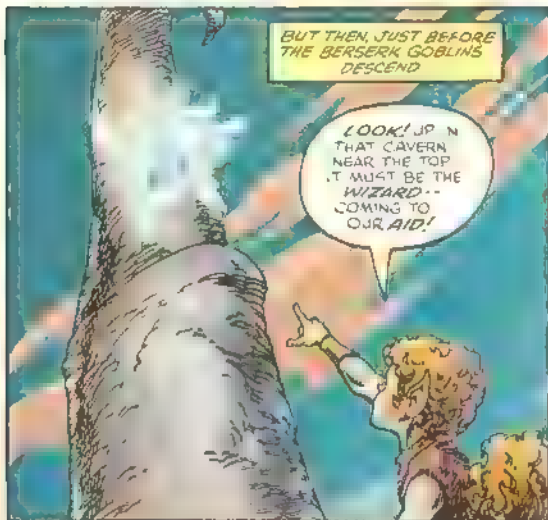
IT'S BUSTED!! THE JUST POWER ROD WON'T WORK! AND WHAT A REVOLTN PLACE FOR IT TO HAPPEN - SMACK N THE MIDDLE OF ALL THESE GOBLINS WITH SKYHOOK MOUNTAIN SO CLOSE -

- ALMOST WITHIN REACH!



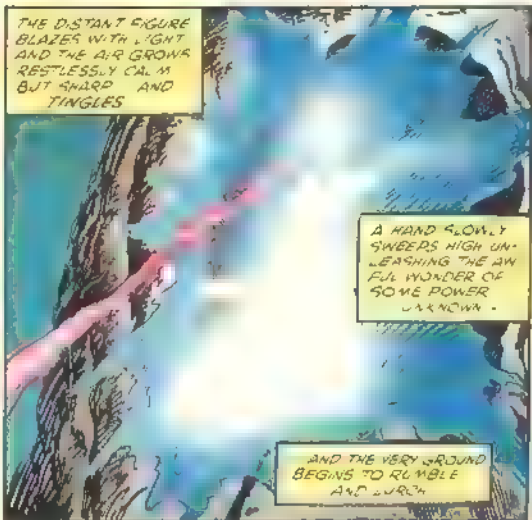
BUT THEN, JUST BEFORE THE BERSERK GOBLINS DESCEND

LOOK! UP N THAT CAVERN NEAR THE TOP. IT MUST BE THE WIZARD - COMING TO OUR AID!



THE DISTANT FIGURE BLAZES WITH LIGHT AND THE AIR GROWS RESTLESSLY CALM BUT SHARP AND TINGLES

A HAND SLOWLY SWEEPS HIGH UNLEASHING THE AWFUL WONDER OF SOME POWER UNKNOWN

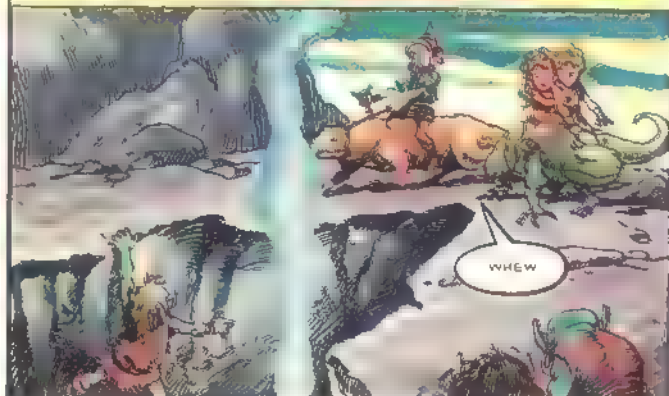


AND THE VERY GROUND BEGINS TO RUMBLE AND BURST

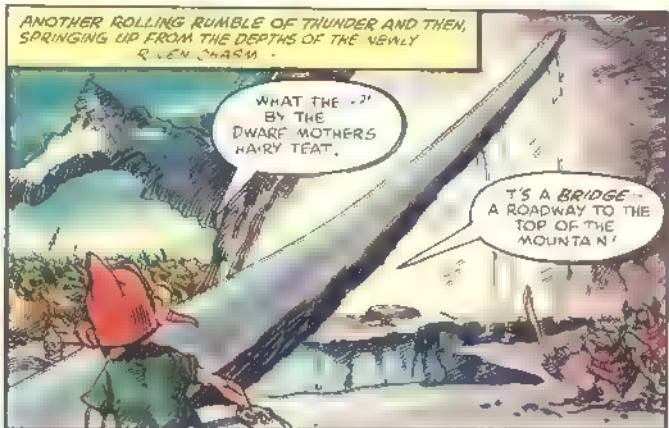
THEN " SPL TS OPEN A JAGGED GAPING TRENCH WHICH SWALLOWS GOBLINS BY THE ANKLES ABOVE



AND WHICH STRETCHES ALL THE WAY FROM THE BASE OF SKYHOOK MOUNTAIN TO A POINT DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE THREE STUNNED SMALL FOLK WHERE IT ABRUPTLY HALTS



ANOTHER ROLLING RUMBLE OF THUNDER AND THEN, SPRINGING UP FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE NEWLY RIVEN CHASM -



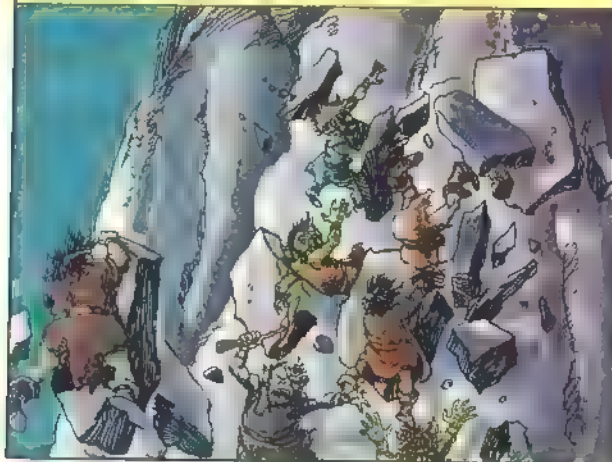
FAR ABOVE AT THE ZENITH OF THE ENCHANTED SPAN THE FIGURE OF LIGHT DISAPPEARS RETREATING INTO THE CAVERN'S SHADOWS



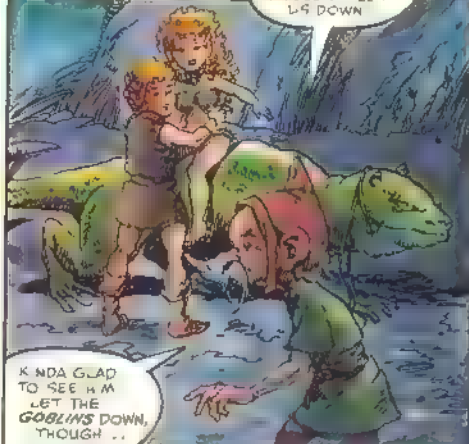
AND WHEN THE TRIO REACH THE TOP, SKITTERING INTO THE CAVERN ITSELF



THE BRIDGE-SPAN COLLAPSES IN CHUNKS TUMBLING DOWN INTO THE CHASM WHERE T SPRANG



SEE? I TOLD YA THE WIZARD OF SKYHOOK MOUNTAIN WAS HOT KREBBLES I KNEW HE WOULDN'T LET U DOWN

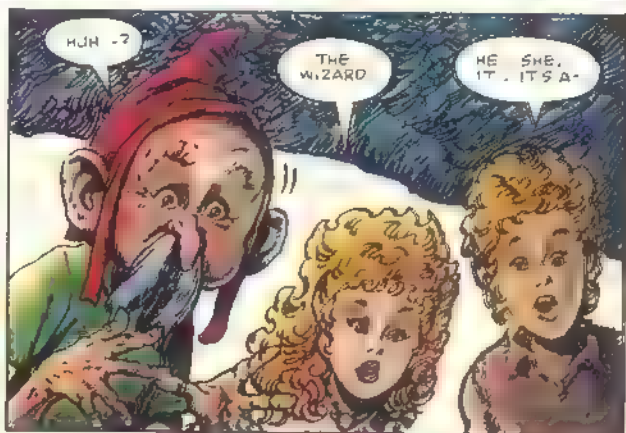


KINDA GLAD TO SEE HIM LET THE GOBLINS DOWN, THOUGH...

NOW COME ON - LET'S FIND HIM



AND WE BETTER MAKE T SNAPPY OR WE'LL NEVER HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO SAVE WEIRDWORLD WITH HIS -



HUH -?

THE WIZARD

HE SHE. IT. IT'S A-

-- A WOMAN!

YES I AM LIANISSA AND I AM NEEDED A WOMAN. BUT A SEVERELY WEAKENED ONE AT THE MOMENT, MY LITTLE FRIENDS

MUCH OF MY POWER HAS LONG SINCE BEEN STRIPPED AND GIVEN TO THE OTHER SIDE SO THAT AS I WEAKEN THE OTHER SIDE STRENGTHENS

AND MY LAST MAGICING EFFORT-- CREATING THE BRIDGE TO GAIN YOU SAFE ENTRY-- HAS ALMOST FINISHED ME

PLEASE - BE NOT AFRAID OF MY HOVERING SOUL-- SPRITES AS LONG AS THEIR LIGHT DOES NOT DIM UNDER THE POWERS OF DARKNESS THERE IS YET HOPE

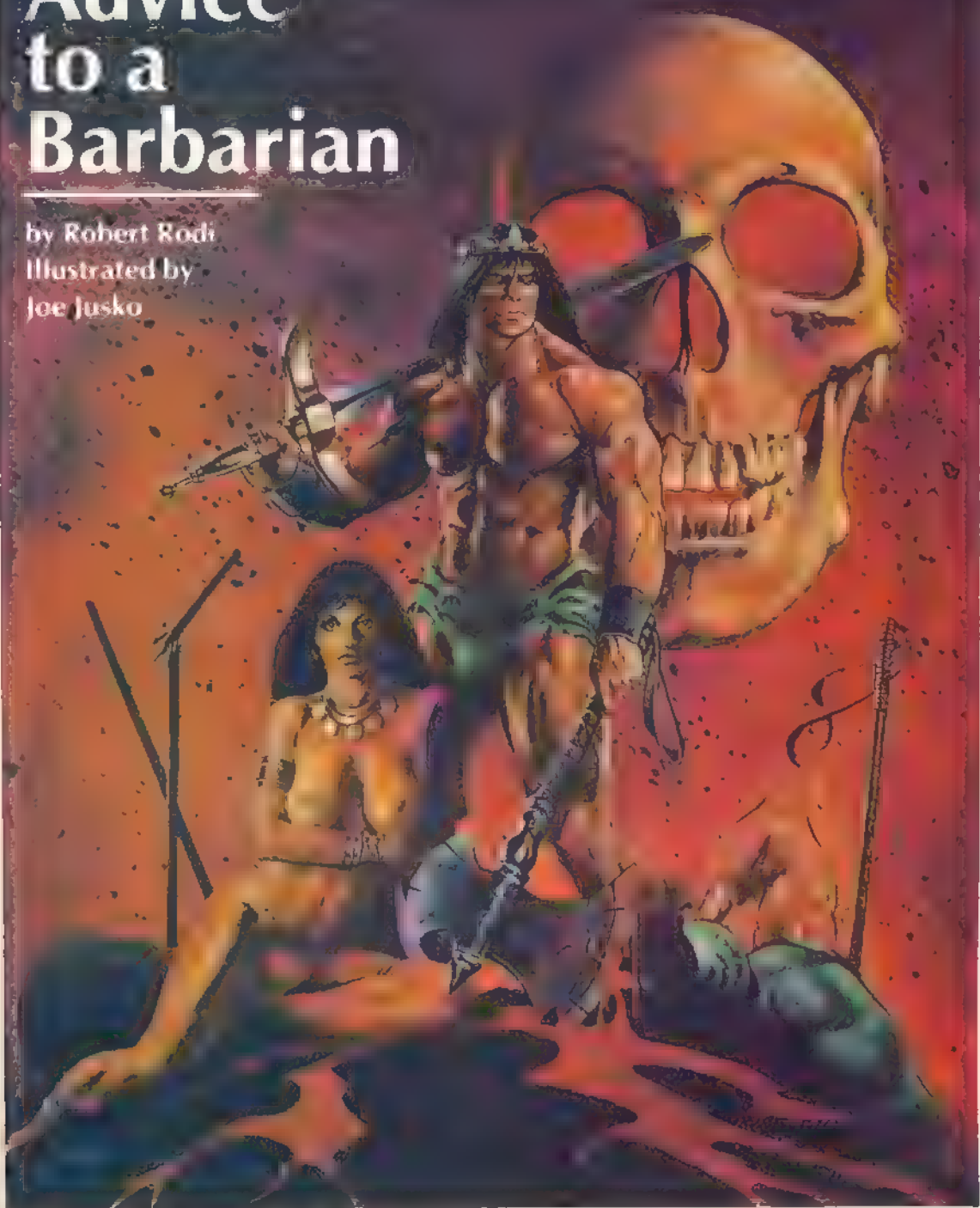
NOW COME CLOSER LITTLE ONES - QUICKLY BEFORE THE GLORY THAT WAS LIANISSA FADED FOREVER

WEIRDWORLD CONTINUES NEXT ISSUE

Advice to a Barbarian

by Robert Rodi

Illustrated by
Joe Jusko





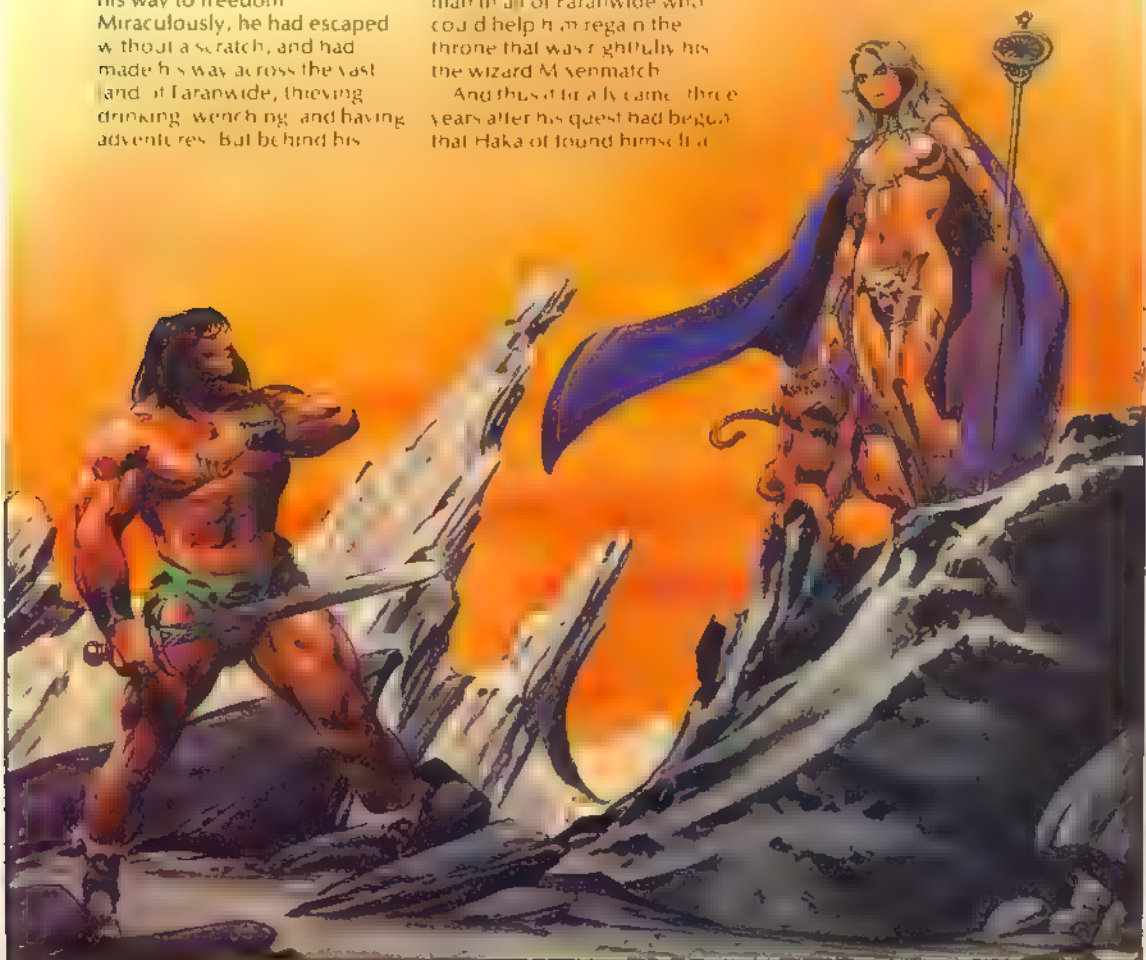
Prince Hakalot, son and heir of the late King Earldeth V, had had his father's throne stolen from under him by his uncle, the new King Rotenaple I. Within minutes of the coup's accomplishment, the usurping uncle had ordered the execution of his nephew, as he was "a danger to the stability of the crown," and Hakalot was therefore forced to slaughter his way to freedom. Miraculously, he had escaped without a scratch, and had made his way across the vast land of Faranwide, thieving, drinking, wenching, and having adventures. But behind his

deceptive appreciation of the good life, there lay a soul stirred by the desire for vengeance and not a night passed during which Hakalot did not curse his uncle and revile his name (when he could remember it).

His quest, from which he was, admittedly, often sidetracked, was to find the one man in all of Faranwide who could help him regain the throne that was rightfully his: the wizard Mixenmatch.

And thus it finally came, three years after his quest had begun, that Hakalot found himself in

the Realm of Mixenmatch himself: the awesome desert Aridwaste. For days, he crossed the scorching sands, his lips parching, his vision dimming, his sweat glands working at optimum output, until finally, he saw a vision, on the horizon.





It was a girl, strolling, she was blond, beautiful aristocratic, and icily sensual. She carried herself with a cool regality, her cloak of deepest purple trailing behind her. A small red creature of indeterminate species scampered around her feet as she walked, as if its entire nervous system had been slipped a mickey.

Despite the desperate state of his health, Hakalot felt the familiar pressure against his loinpouch. He desired this enchantress, and the very thought of taking her gave him his second wind.

He caught up with her. "Woman," he said, standing between her back and the sun,

so that his shadow fell over her — a phallic rape symbol, the significance of which escaped him entirely. All he knew was that it turned him on, but good.

She whirled, facing him with only the barest hint of consternation. "You are addressing me, I presume?" she asked flatly. The creature scampered behind her, and hid beneath her cloak.

I am Hakalot, Prince of Faranwide, and true heir to the throne of my forefathers. And I — hunger." This last word was more snarled than spoken.

"Well, Prince of Faranwide, neither your hunger nor your majesty will be appeased by your traipsing around

Aridwaste. Unless you plan to consume lizards. Or conspire with them."

Anger stung his cheeks. "I came here seeking Mixenmatch."

She smiled. "The wizard, Mixenmatch, you mean."

"Indeed." Her face had been alerted with familiarity when he had spoken the name. Curiosity was born in him, and as his mind could only handle one matter at a time, the loinpouch began to droop. "You have knowledge of him, woman?"

"Yes, man," she said brightly. "He was my father. Not a bad one, either. A bit reclusive, perhaps, but during a girl's teen years, that's just the thing, isn't it?"



know some of his secrets, his black arts; surely you can bend men's minds to do your will.

Indeed I can. My name isn't Wotalease for nothing. But my magicks are different from my father's, I can't help you.

You are an enchantress, Wotalease? This I know. I have seen magick done. I am no stranger to the world. I have seen much, and slain many, but I know my limits.

I think you may overestimate them," she said brusquely, as she snatched her cloak back from his dirty hands. "In fact, I'm sure of it.

He swore you shall not find me ungrateful. I will make you my Queen. You shall be the shining star of my court, and be celebrated by my people.

That's all I need," she said testily, "to lord it over a bunch of people who eat with their fingers." She tried to soften her expression. "Look, Hakalot, you're not a bad sort, but you're just not my type, you see? I may be too discriminating, but I'd rather wait for a guy a little higher up the ladder of evolution, if you know what mean.

He was becoming upset. You dishonor Hakalot. You think that Hakalot shall not become king. You prophesy his failure.

He eyed her with bewilderment. "Where be he now?"

"Father? Oh, you're too late. He's bought it."

"I—I do not understand. You know. Bought the farm." He did not respond. She sighed in exasperation.

He kicked. He stabbed out. He died. You know, 'the-great-sleep-from-which-none-awaken.

Comprehension flickered on his simian face. "Ah, yes!" he said with enthusiasm, then after absorbing its meaning. "Oh, no."

Oh, yes, sorry to disappoint, but there you are. An awkward silence fell about them. "Well, nice to have met you, your royal highness. Have a nice life."

"No, wait!" he said, grabbing her cloak as she turned to move away. "You must needs give me a drink! My wicked uncle has stolen my throne! Only the wizard Mixenmatch could have helped me. He be dead, but you are blood of his blood! Surely you

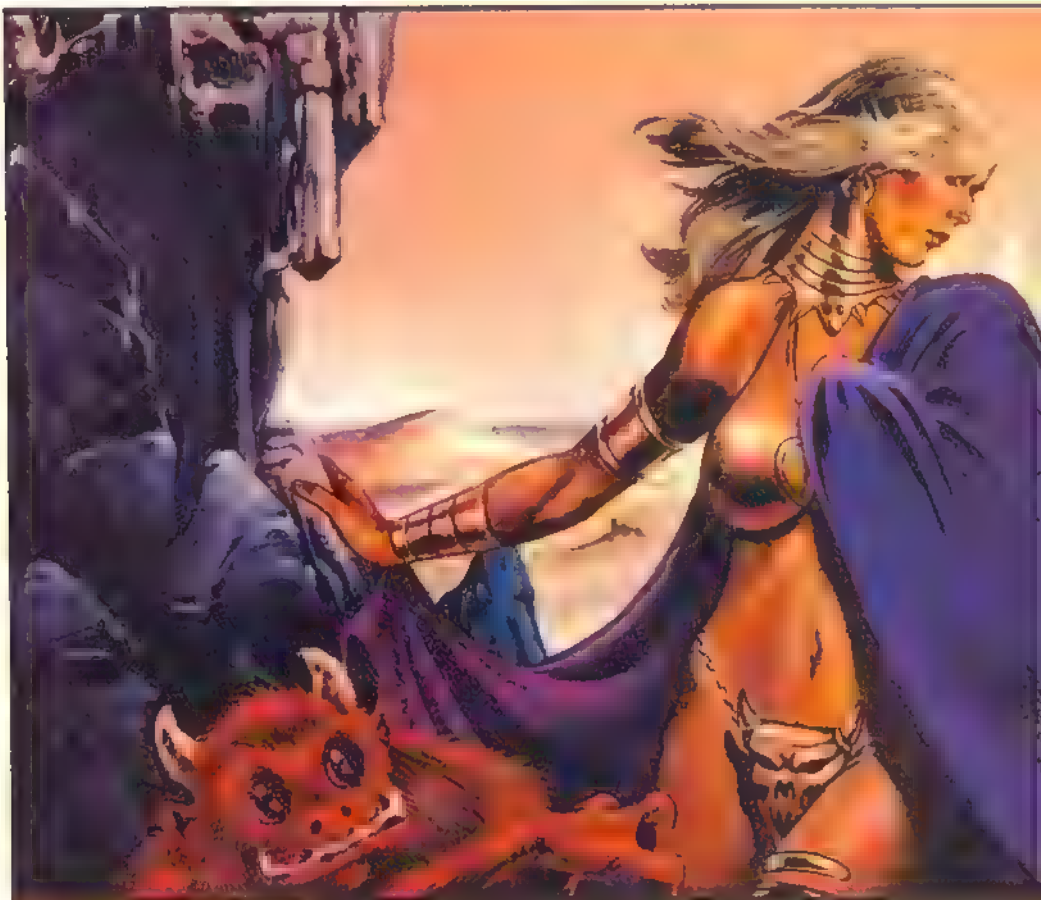
She sighed. "Well, frankly yes I do. And if you must know, I'm not a bit sorry about it either. Like I said, you aren't exactly a bad sort, but well how can I put this?" She thought for a moment, then pointed to Hakalot's forehead. "No one's home," she said. "Get my point?"

Hakalot will show you wench! Hakalot will be the greatest of them all!

Listen," she said smoothing back her hair, "you really ought to reassess your apportionment of priorities. I mean, is being King all that important to you? Think about it: even if you do regain your crown — goddess knows it's unlikely, but just for the sake of argument, let's imagine it — what then? You've wasted so much time on this quest for my father, that you'd be overthrowing a government that's been functioning

efficiently for three years now! The people will see you as the usurper. And woe betide you if you can't maintain that standard of government yourself. Do you have advisors, Hakalot? Men you can trust? Do you have a Chancellor? Do you have a Minister of Finance? Do you have a Council of War? Do you even have a Master of Horse? And if you don't, can you expect all your uncle's people to come over to your side just because you say 'please'?"





Hakalot was silent at length. "Your words are sobering. I have much to think on." Then he turned on her violently. "But there be still honor to consider! Yea, you have forgot — honor be all!"

"Don't be a fool, honor is nothing. Do starving peasants look the other way, and say 'What the heck we may die, but our King still has his honor'? Do hostile enemies say, 'Yes Faranwide is now weakened — but we cannot attack such an honorabie ruler'? Wake up and smell the coffee, Hakalot!"

Coffee?"

Look, why don't you find some nice farm girl with an ample bosom and wide hips who can bear your not inconsiderable weight without

complaint, and settle down in a little tent somewhere to rut your life away in peace? I really think it's all you're good for. I don't mean to be harsh, but the finer points of feudal monarchy can hardly be expected to come easily to someone who is himself just barely bipedal. Think about it.

No, wench, I will not, I cannot. You almost swayed me against my will, such is your siren-call that even mighty Hakalot almost fell to it. But your bewitching days are over, demoness! Prepare to die!"

He lifted his sword high, but Wolatease didn't flinch. Instead, her little creature dashed from beneath her cloak and sank its teeth into Hakalot's sinewy thigh.



He shrieked in real agony, and dropped the sword. "Call it off! Enchantress, call it off!"

"Sorry," she said "Unlike yourself, I do not commit tactical errors"

"I will spare you, I swear it!"

"Oh! How gracious of you. But in case you hadn't noticed, I'm the one in the bargaining position, not you."

He fell tears in his eyes, kicking his leg violently; but the creature determinedly kept its toothy hold. "Then — say on!" he cried. "What will you?"

"I don't know," she replied, biting a finger. "Let me think

"By all the gods!" screeched Hakalot, as he pounded his massive fists against the sands "I cannot wait long!"



She sighed, and shrugged her shoulders. "Guess this round goes to you, Prince. I can't think of a thing I want from you. Come away, Phyllis," she said to the creature

At this command, Phyllis did indeed come away, bringing a chunk of Hakalot's leg with her. The barbarian screamed for a full twenty seconds.

Wotasee's hands flew to her face. "Oh, dear; I should have told her to let go first!" While made a tentative plan across her lips. "Really, Hakalot, that was completely unintentional. Honest. Cross my heart."

"Demoness," he seethed, as he bound the gaping wound with a sheet of linen she handed him from beneath her cloak. "Hakalot shall not forget this. Hakalot shall remember forever."

"Again, I think you

her accusation
she clicked her tongue. "I

never have liked you barbarians," she said. "You always run true to form. Get yourself into an impossible situation, and then wait for a wizard to come along and bail you out. Well, the buck stops here. A new age is beginning, and I am its prototype." She turned, and started walking back across the sands. Phyllis the creature, followed spasmodically.

"Wench!" cried Hakalot. "You cannot mean to leave me thus! I shall surely perish!"

She turned her head coyly. "So? What's one less barbarian? There are too many of you, for my taste, as this. If I have my way, maybe people will start writing books about us."

the odds will be evened a bit.

Consider this a symbolic

away. Goodbye.
And then she was gone, to



Her mother was the first born of Caesar. Her father, a prince in his own land, a slave in Rome. At the age of four, Marada saw her father broken on the rack, disemboweled and, finally, drawn and quartered. It was a public execution and, though the Prince was a long time dying, he uttered not a sound. That night, Marada's mother fled the Eterna City, taking her child to be raised free, far from the place that had claimed the life of her beloved. That was twenty years ago. The child is a woman now, and that woman a warrior known and respected throughout the Empire as

MARADA THE SHE-WOLF

BY CHRIS CLAREMONT
AND JOHN BOLTON

BUT WHEN SOUGHT AND FOUND BY DONAL MOGELLYANLLWYR, WARLORD OF FABLED ASHANDRIAR, SHE HAD CHANGED ALMOST BEYOND RECOGNITION. THE PROUD WARRIOR WAS NO MORE, IN HER PLACE, A MEEK, COMPLIANT, SUBMISSIVE WENCH.

SHE'D BEEN CAPTURED BY A WIZARD, RAVISHED BY HIS DEMON LORD, AND THOUGH HER BODY HAD SURVIVED THE ORDEAL, HER SOUL HAD NOT. UNKNOWN TO HER, THE SORCERER DISPATCHED A DEMON TO RECAPTURE HER. UNKNOWN TO HER AND DONAL BOTH-- IT HAD FOUND HER!

ARE YOU SO TERRIFIED BY WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU THAT YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON WHAT YOU ARE?

WHAT AM I DONAL? WARRIOR? WOMAN? BOTH? PERHAPS I WAS FOOLISH OF ME TO THINK MY SKILL AT ARMS MADE ME SAFE, INVIOLENT.

AT LEAST NOW I HAVE NO ILLUSIONS

THAT IS GOOD, SHE-WOLF
FOR THAT MEANS THOU SHALT
BE AS PLEASED TO BE REUNITED
WITH THY CONSORT YGARON,
AND HIS BRETHREN AS
THEY WILL BE TO
WELCOME THEE

AHHRRR!!

DONAL!

BY THE
GREAT
GODS,
WHAT-
?!

DOST THOU NOT RECOGNIZE THY
TRUE SELF, MARADA - FORMED
OF A SYNTHESIS OF THINE ESSENCE
WITH THAT OF THE MABDKHARA?

THOU ART PROMISED TO
THE LORDS OF THE ABYSS.
BOUND TO THEM BODY
AND SOUL, 'TIL THE END
OF TIME. LONG HAVE
I SOUGHT THEE

AND NOW THAT I
HAVE FOUND THEE..

KEEP
AWAY!

NOTHING SHALL KEEP ME
FROM DELIVERING THEE TO
MY DREAD MASTERS

AAIIT--!
MY
SHOULDER
--BURNS
LIKE IT'S
BEEN
SPLASHED
WITH
ACID!

THE
DEMON'S
CLAWS
MUST BE
POISONED!

TAKE A LAST, FOND LOOK AT THY
WORLD, BITCH, FOR THOU SHALT
NE'ER AGAIN BEHOLD IT.

LET HER
ALONE!

A GOOD
SHOT,
CHILD.
RHIANNON
TAUGHT
YOL WELL

FATHER, MARADA, ARE
YOU BOTH ALL RIGHT?!
WHAT WAS THAT
THING ?!

A
PIECE OF
MYSELF

NO!
PLEASE -
NO!

A- arienrhod?

I'VE MINDCALLED
THE GUARDS BUT IT
W'LL TAKE THEM TIME
TO REACH US. I LET US
AWAY FROM HERE, YOU
TWO, QUICKLY. WE'RE
TOO VULNERABLE

SCUM, DIEST THOU,
THINK A SINGLE
ARCANE BOLT

COULD SLAY
A REAVER OF
THE ABYSS?!

THINE ARROGANCE
SHALL COST
THEE DEAR!

DONAL, ARI--
RUN! IT'S ME
SHE WANTS!

ASHANDRIAR IS MY
STRONGHOLD, STARHAIR.
I AM PLEDGED TO
PROTECT ALL WHO
RESIDE WITHIN ITS
BOUNDRIES

BOLD WORDS WAR
LORD THEY WILL
MAKE A FITTING
EPITAPH

NOW, SHE-WOLF,
IT IS THY TURN.

I STRUCK YOU DOWN
ONCE, REAVER, I CAN
DO SO AGAIN.

MARADA,
TAKE
FATHER
AND GET
OUT OF
HERE!

THY BOLTS OF
ELDRITCH FIRE
CAN HURT,
WHELP-- BUT
NOT KILL!

I SENSE A POWER WITHIN
THEE THAT RIVALS MARADA'S
I SHALL TAKE THEE TO MY
MASTERS. THEY SHALL BE
PLEASED TO HAVE TWO
SACRIFICES FOR THE
PRICE OF ONE

MARADA!

ARI!!

I'LL
COVER
YOU!

SECONDS LATER, SECONDS TOO LATE, RHIANNON
ARRIVES WITH A SQUAD OF WARRIORS TO FIND
MARADA CRADLING DONAL'S LIMP, BLOODY
FORM IN HER LAP, STARING DRY-EYED INTO
SPACE, HER FACE SUFFUSED WITH AN OMINOUS,
DEADLY CALM. OF ARIANRHOD, THERE IS NO SIGN

FOR A DAY AND A NIGHT MARADA STANDS ALONE ATOP THE HIGHEST TOWER IN ASHANDRIAR, WRAPPED IN DONAL'S CARACALLA HIS SCARLET WARLOAK - WHILE RHIANNON FIGHTS TO SAVE HIS LIFE

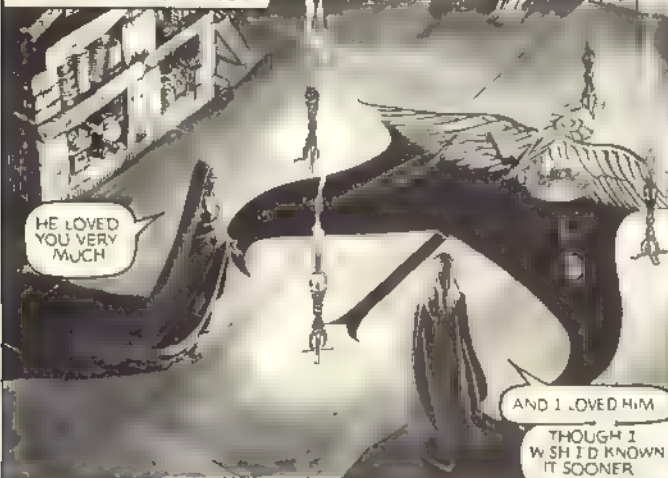
NONE DARE DISTURB HER SOLITUDE



BUT THEY WON'T EXCHANGE ARI FOR ME. IF I GO, THEY'LL TRY TO KEEP US BOTH. BUT THAT WAY, AT LEAST SHE'LL HAVE A CHANCE



THE PAIN OF HER LOSS IS UNENDURABLE. SHE WANTS TO RUN AWAY WITHIN HERSELF, TO COWER ONCE MORE BEHIND THE WALLS SHE'D BUILT AROUND HER HEART. BUT SHE DOES NOT. SHE SITS BESIDE DONAL UNTIL HE BREATHES HIS LAST, THEN KISSES HIM FAREWELL AND FOLLOWS RHIANNON TO THE AGED SORCERESS' INNER SANCTUM.



HE LOVED YOU VERY MUCH

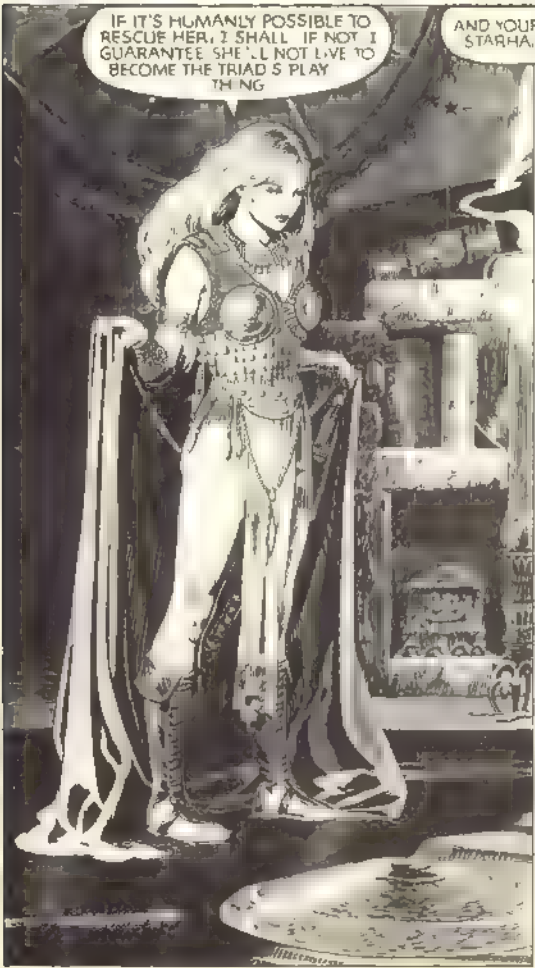
AND I LOVED HIM

THOUGH I WISH I'D KNOWN IT SOONER

I CAN SEND YOU TO ARIANRHOD, MARADA, BUT BEYOND THAT I CANNOT AID YOU. EVEN MY POWERS HAVE LIMITS.

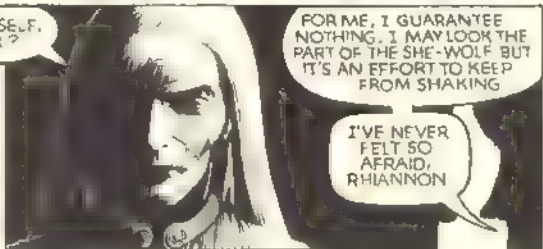


I UNDERSTAND, RHIANNON



IF IT'S HUMANLY POSSIBLE TO RESCUE HER, I SHALL. IF NOT, I GUARANTEE SHE'LL NOT LIVE TO BECOME THE TRIAD'S PLAY THING

AND YOURSELF, STARHAR?



FOR ME, I GUARANTEE NOTHING. I MAY LOOK THE PART OF THE SHE-WOLF BUT IT'S AN EFFORT TO KEEP FROM SHAKING

I'VE NEVER FELT SO AFRAID, RHIANNON



YET YOU ARE DETERMINED TO PROCEED?

I MUST



MY BLESSINGS GO WITH YOU-- DAUGHTER OF MY HEART AND MY LOVE!

THE SPELL IS CAST. THE GREAT WORDS OF POWER UTTERED, AND IN A FLARE OF THE PUREST WHITE LIGHT

MARADA VANISHES FROM EARTH

TO THE EYE, MARADA STANDS
IN A NOISOME EARTHY SWAMP.

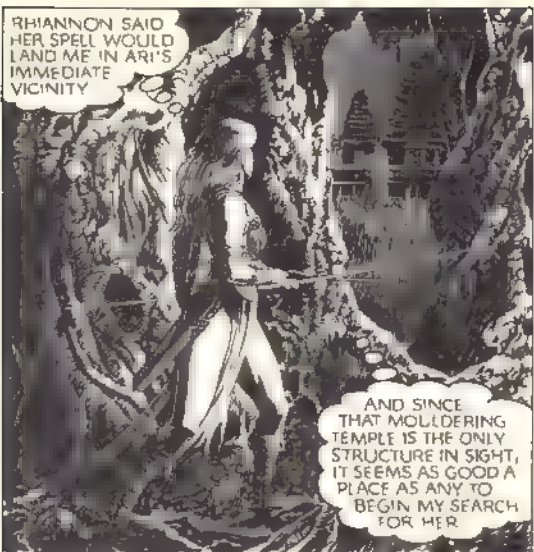
SHE KNOWS BETTER. HER
SOUL KNOWS. FOR WHAT
IT IS, A REALM AS ALIEN
AND INHOSPITABLE AS THE
SURFACE OF THE MOON,
POSSESSING A FUNDAMENTAL
WRONGNESS THAT
RUBS HER NERVES RAW.

THE AIR IS THICK WITH THE STENCH OF PRIMAL
CORRUPTION. THIS TOO SHE RECOGNIZES -- FROM
THE MOMENT OF YGARON'S APPEARANCE IN
THE WIZARD'S TOWER.

THIS IS HIS DOMAIN -- BESIDE
WHICH TARTARUS PALES IN
COMPARISON. THE NAOS OF
THE ABYSS, THE BOTTOM OF
THE BOTTOMLESS PIT, WHOSE
UNIMAGINABLE DESOLATION
CRUSHES ALL LIFE, ALL HOPE.

YGARON MUST
BE AWARE THAT I'M
HERE. I WONDER
WHEN HE'LL MAKE
SOME MOVE -- AND
WHAT THAT MOVE
WILL BE?





RHANNON SAID
HER SPELL WOULD
LAND ME IN ARI'S
IMMEDIATE
VICINITY

AND SINCE
THAT MOLLERING
TEMPLE IS THE ONLY
STRUCTURE IN SIGHT,
IT SEEMS AS GOOD A
PLACE AS ANY TO
BEGIN MY SEARCH
FOR HER



OUTLAND
BITCH, YOU'LL
FIND NOTHING
HERE BUT THE
DEATH YOU
SORICHLI
DESERVE!

A DEMON!



REACTING WITHOUT CONSCIOUS THOUGHT
MARADA SPINS AND FIRES

AAIIII--!

AND A FIERCE
EXULTATION GRIPS
HER AS THE ARROW
STRIKES HOME

I DREADED THIS
MOMENT - I FEARED
THAT - WHEN I WAS
FINALLY CHALLENGED -
I WOULD FREEZE BE
UNABLE TO FIGHT
BUT, FOR ALL MY
FEARS

THE WARRIOR IN ME STILL LIVES - UMPH!

BUT NOT
FOR LONG,
MAMMAL!

TO SLAY ONE OF US
MAY BE A SIMPLE
MATTER, BUT OUR
NUMBERS ARE LEGION!
ALL THE MIGHT OF
FABLED ROME ITSELF
COULD NOT PREVAIL
AGAINST US!

THAT,
PIT
SPAWN,
IS A
BOAST

GARGH!

UTTERED BY THOSE WHO HAVE
NEVER FELT THE MIGHT OF ROME

THOSE WHO
HAVE KNOW
DIFFERENT!

THE EASE WITH WHICH I
SLEW THESE DEMONS AJGERS
WELL FOR THE FUTURE, BUT I
MUSTN'T DELUDE MYSELF
I'VE PROVEN NOTHING 'TIL
I'VE FACED THE MONSTER
WHO'S HAUNTED MY DREAMS
THESE MANY MONTHS:
Y'GARON.

HE WILL BE
MY TRUE TEST

MINERVA
PROTECT
ME!

IT'S SOME HUGE, HELLISH KIND OF
OCTOPUS. ITS TENTACLES ARE FOUL AS
SEWER SLIME TO THE TOUCH- AND
THEY BURN!

A COLD FIRE
REACHING INTO
MY MIND,
NUMBING HEART
AND SOUL!

IT'S -
CRUSHING
ME!

CAN FEEL BONES GRINDING--
ALMOST NO AIR IN LUNGS--
ONLY SECOND. LEFT TO ACT



MY BODY
TWISTED AT
AN AWKWARD
ANGLE

I CAN'T
MUSTER
MY FULL
STRENGTH
FOR EACH
BLOW BUT,
DIFFICULT
THOUGH IT
MAY BE, I
MUST TRY!

GODDESS BE
PRAISED I'M
FREE!

DONAL'S AXE
WAS SO SHARP,
EVEN A CASUAL
HALF-HEARTED
STRIKE DID
THE TRICK



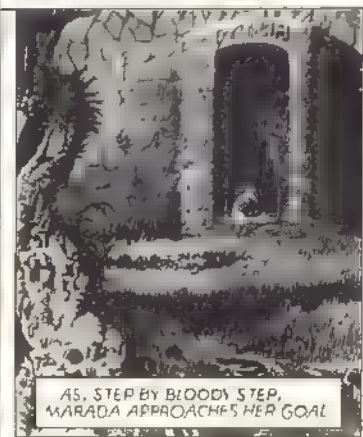
THE MONSTER IS
IN AGONY GOOD

THE MORE IT
CONCENTRATES
ON ITS OWN
HURT



THE LESS
LIKELY IT IS TO
PURSUE ME

FROM THAT POINT ON, SHE FIGHTS FOR
EVERY INCH OF GROUND AGAINST A NEVER
ENDING HORDE OF CREATURES SPAWNED IN
THE ULTIMATE NIGHTMARE. THEY CRAWL,
WALK, SLITHER, FLY. THEY BURN WITH
VENOM. TEAR WITH FANGS, RIP WITH CLAWS.
THEY ATTACK. AND THEY DIE.



AS, STEP BY BLOODY STEP,
MARADA APPROACHES HER GOAL



WELL, WELL, WELL. SEE WHO'S HERE, MILORD. -
OUR SILVER HAIR'D SHE WOLF, LOOKING SOMEWHAT
WORN OUT BY THE WARM WELCOME WE ARRANGED
FOR HER. DO YOU THINK SHE APPRECIATED OUR
GENEROSITY?

STEP THIS WAY,
SORCERER, AND I'LL
SHOW MY APPRECIATION--
IN A MANNER YOU'RE NOT
LIKELY TO FORGET.

MARADA,
GO BACK!
RUN!

IT'S YOU THEY WANT!
THEY FEAR YOU! THEY
KIDNAPPED ME TO LURE
YOU INTO THEIR HANDS!

BE SILENT, CHILD. THE SHE-WOLF KNOWS THAT SHE WISHES TO PROVE HERSELF BY PITTING HER PATHETIC HUMAN MIGHT AGAINST THAT OF MINE. FORGETTING THAT SOMETHING WHICH HAS ONCE BEEN SHATTERED AS SHE WAS WILL NEVER AGAIN BE AS STRONG.

A LORD OF THE ABYSS FEARS NOTHING, MARADA-- AND ESPECIALLY NOTHING HUMAN. THOU ART OUR RIGHTFUL PREY, FIT ONLY FOR SLAUGHTER. SO IT WAS AT THE DAWN OF TIME--AND SO IT SHALL BE AGAIN!



THY TOYS WILL AVAIL THEE NAUGHT. LAY THEM DOWN... AND LAY THYSELF DOWN BESIDE THEM. THAT I MAY ONCE MORE TAKE PLEASURE FROM THY COMELY FORM.

THEN, THOU MAYEST WATCH, AS I DESPOIL THE GODDESS CHILD.

SINCE YOU DESIRE ME, AND MY WEAPONS, Y'GARON--

-- THEN BY ALL MEANS, HAVE THEM!

MY ARM!

THOU HAST DRAWN BLOOD!

CRAVEN WHORE, THOU SHALT PAY FOR THAT!

I KNOW THE LITANY DEMON LORD. BEFORE YOU'RE THROUGH, I'LL BEG FOR DEATH, AND YOU'LL LAUGHINGLY REFUSE ME.

MANY HAVE THREATENED ME. MANY HAVE LIVED TO REGRET IT.

THIS IS THE MOMENT OF TRUTH AS Y'GARON SAID. HE BROKE ME. HE KNOWS IT, I KNOW IT-- AND HE'S CERTAIN HE CAN DO IT AGAIN. WHILE I... I AM CERTAIN OF NOTHING.

MARADA MAKES
THE FIRST MOVE



AND YGARON PARRIES
EXPERTLY, HIS SWORD
SMEARING A TRAIL OF
FIRE THE LENGTH OF
MARADA'S BLADE OF
ELDRITCH STEEL

THIS SWORD
WAS FORGED
FOR DONAL

YET ITS WEIGHT
AND BALANCE FEEL
PERFECT FOR ME.

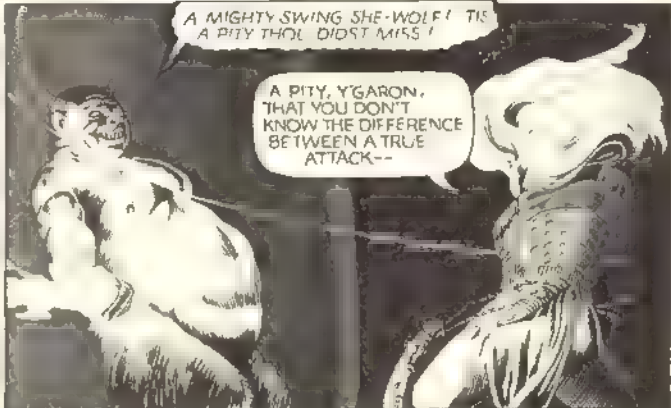


I'VE NEVER HANDLED SO
MAGNIFICENT A WEAPON



IT FEELS
AS IF IT WAS
MADE FOR
ME, AS IF IT'S
A LIVING
EXTENSION
OF MY OWN
BODY!

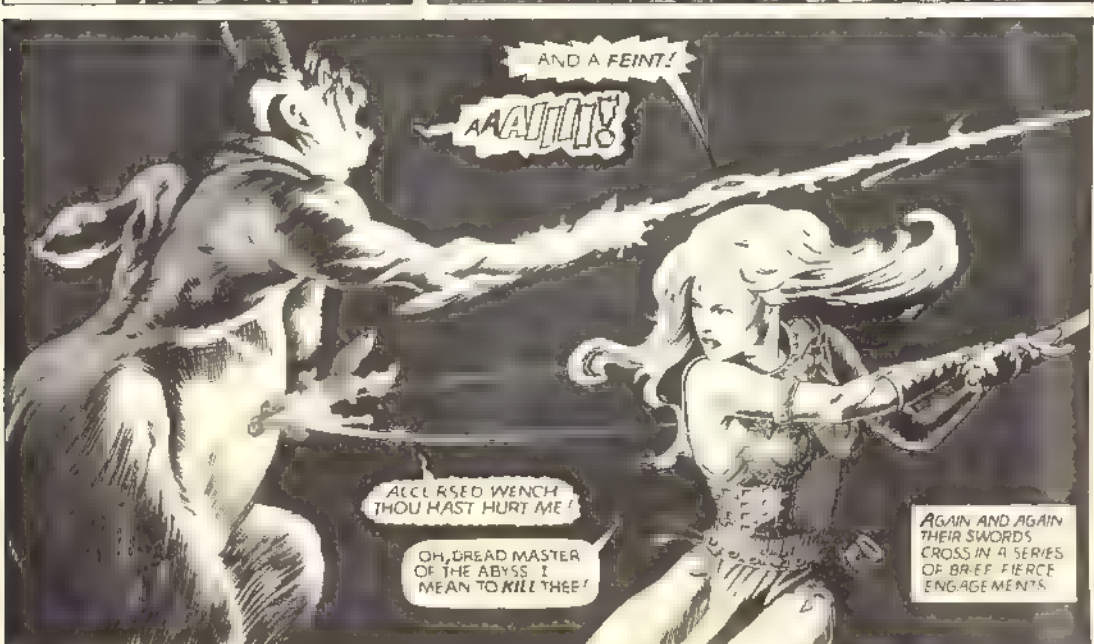
A MIGHTY SWING SHE-WOLF! 'TIS
A PITY THOU DIDST MISS!



A PITY, YGARON,
THAT YOU DON'T
KNOW THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN A TRUE
ATTACK--

AND A FEINT!

AAATTTT!



ACCURSED WENCH
THOU HAST HURT ME!

OH, DREAD MASTER
OF THE ABYSS I
MEAN TO KILL THEE!

AGAIN AND AGAIN
THEIR SWORDS
CROSS IN A SERIES
OF BRIEF FIERCE
ENGAGEMENTS



AND AS THE DUEL PROGRESSES-- NEITHER COMBATANT SEEMINGLY GIVING AN INCH, OR SLACKENING THE BRUTAL PACE-- A SLIGHT SMILE MARKS THE CORNERS OF MARADA'S MOUTH. SHE MOVES WITH INHUMAN GRACE, ONE BLENDING FLUIDLY WITH THE NEXT, MAKING Y'GARON SEEM SLOW AND CLUMSY BY COMPARISON

HE TRIES TO BREAK THROUGH HER GUARD WITH SKILL THEN SMASH HIS WAY THROUGH USING BRUTE FORCE. BOTH METHODS FAIL. FOR AN INSTANT, THE BATTLE HANGS IN THE BALANCE. AND THEN SUDDENLY, IT IS THE DEMON WHO'S ON THE DEFENSIVE



I WOULD NOT HAVE BELIEVED IT POSSIBLE! MARADA IS DRIVING Y'GARON BACK! IT NOT STOPPED, SHE MIGHT ACTUALLY DO THE UNTHINKABLE -- AND SLAY ONE OF THE MABDHARA!



I MUST PULL THE SHE-WOLF'S FANGS - AT ONCE!

THAT SCENT--! THE SORCERER HAS CONJURED **FLOWERS!** THEIR PERFUME... DULLS MY MIND. IT'S BECOMING SO HARD TO... TO THINK WHILE THEY MAKE MY BODY, INCREDIBLY SENSITIVE

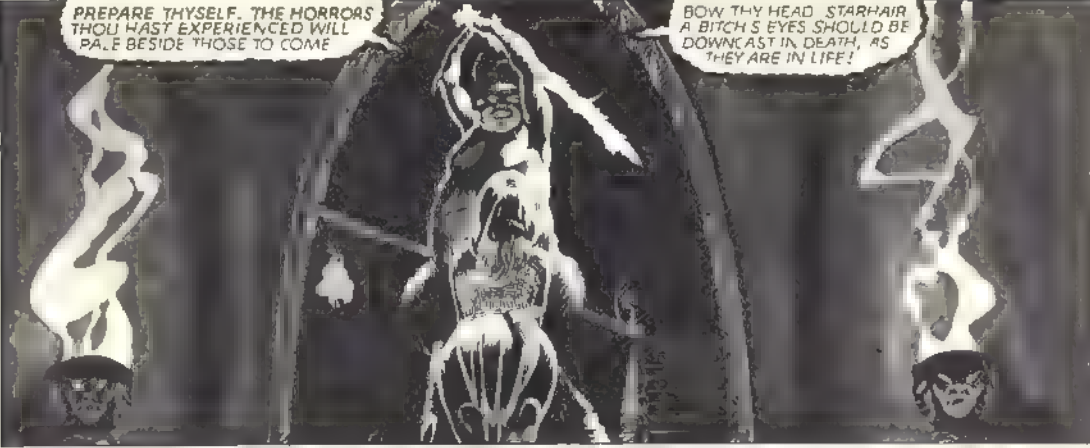
THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH... IS A CARESS I ACHIE I HUNGER!



FRAILTY, THY NAME IS WOMAN

DAMN YOU, MONSTER!

WHY, BECAUSE I HAVE SHOWN THEE THY TRUE NATURE?



PREPARE THYSELF. THE HORRORS
THOU HAST EXPERIENCED WILL
PALE BESIDE THOSE TO COME

BOW THY HEAD STARHAIR
A BITCH'S EYES SHOULD BE
DOWNCAST IN DEATH, AS
THEY ARE IN LIFE!



I BOW TO
NO ONE, YOU
BASTARD

--LEAST
OF ALL
YOU!

YOUR MASTER IS NO
MORE NECROMANCER

SAY YOUR PRAYERS, BECAUSE
YOU'RE ABOUT TO FOLLOW
HIS EXAMPLE

WHAT-
WHAT
HAVE YOU
DONE?





ARE YOU WELL, ARI? DID THEY HARM YOU?

THEY THEY THREATENED BUT I WASN'T EVEN TOUCHED. I'M SO... SO GLAD YOU CAME, MARADA. I WAS SO SCARED, BUT WHY DIDN'T FATHER COME WITH YOU? YOU'RE WEARING HIS SWORD. IS HE ALL RIGHT?

NO, MY DARLING DONAL IS DEAD

MARADA LETS THE CHILD CRY COMFORTING HER AS BEST SHE CAN UNTIL THE STORM OF GRIEF BEGINS TO PASS, AND THEN...

ON YOUR FEET, ARI. HEAR THAT? THE LESSER DEMONS SENSE Y'GARON'S DEATH THEY'RE A READY HAMMERING AT THE GATE AND WALLS. THEY'LL BE INSIDE SOON.

WE HAVE TWO CHOICES. FIGHT-- AND ALMOST SURELY DIE-- OR RUN. I'D PREFER TO RUN

I WAS TAUGHT THE **SPELL OF TELEPORTATION** MY F-FATHER AND GRANDMOTHER USE



THEN CAST IT, CHILD, QUICKLY

HER VOICE SURPRISINGLY FIRM ITS TONE'S BOOMING THROUGH THE TEMPLE, MY GIRL, WORKS HER MAGIC WITH ALL THE POWER AT HER COMMAND. THERE'S A BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT, A DISORIENTING WRENCH IN THE FABRIC OF REALITY..

AND A DECAYING TEMPLE IN A DAEMONIC SWAMP GIVES WAY TO A RUINED TEMPLE IN A JUNGLE

I DON'T MEAN TO BE CRITICAL, ARI, BUT RHANNON DID IT BETTER

I SHOULD HAVE PAID MORE ATTENTION DURING MY LESSONS DID THE SPELL WORK, THOUGH? ARE WE ON EARTH?!

WE'LL KNOW SOON ENOUGH IF WE AREN'T.

BUT HOW WILL WE GET HOME? I COULD ALWAYS TRY THE SPELL AGAIN

I THINK NOT UNLESS IT'S ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. FOR THE NONCE, MY GIRL, WE'LL USE THE MEANS THE GODDESS GAVE ALL MEN AND WOMEN OUR LEGS.

LET'S GET STARTED, ARIANRHOD IT'S LIKELY TO BE A LONG WALK HOME

AND IT WAS

e



A short, fat man, like sewer plug and he was hidden by the shadow of the monster as spookship. Enraged, he knew the direct approach was the only way to get by the guard.

The mother of the boy was in and
missed you. The boy was a doctor
in the field and earlier named
he said the boy had been
sent overseas. Search of the boy
the mother was working through the
process.

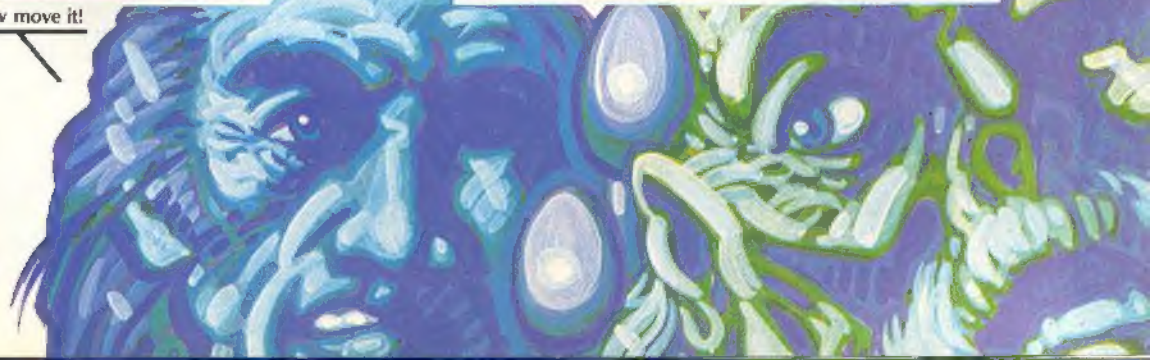


He began to sweat; if he had figured wrong, he was dead. But then he saw what he wanted — the Kyban was obviously a doctor.



English? You speak English? Good; now, you'll stay alive, Doc; but don't try anything cute. There's gotta be an operating room around here — you're gonna take me there and do a little surgery on me; and one move that looks wrong and I take off the top of your skull, understand? Great.

Now move it!





Tallant refused even a local anesthetic. He sat propped up, a silver-shaft revolver pointed directly at the medic. The Kyban stared at the cylinder of the gun, saw the little capsules in their chambers, thought of how they were fired through the altering mechanism to come out as raw energy, and he wielded the electroscalpel with care. In twenty minutes it was over. The operation was a complete success.

As the incision firmed up under the alien epidermizer, Tallant studied the bomb's mechanism. Then he motioned to the doctor.

Now graft the bomb to my stump.



It took ten minutes of pistol-whipping for Tallant to realize the medic would go only so far and no further. He would not do as he was ordered. At least, not under his own will.



It took some doing, but he got the full demolishing dose into the alien's nostrils.



When he awoke, he would do anything for another of the packets in Tallant's pocket. Tallant wanted one thing: the sun-bomb grafted to his arm where he could detonate it in an instant.



There was no pain.
The bomb was set into the stump with a simple wire hookup that would detonate under several circumstances:

If Tallant consciously triggered the bomb.

If anyone tried to remove it against his will.

If he died and his heart stopped.

The Kyben doctor had done his work well.

Sure Doc, you can have the snuff. But first take me up-decks to meet your Commandant.



This is the last man on Deald's World speaking, my Kyben friends. I'm the man you've finally realized carries the sun-bomb. But now I control it. I can set it off at will and blow this planet to dust...and you with it!

The medic directed Tallant to the communications console and patched him through to the Kyben armada; to the men in the field, to the ships ranged across the field, to the skelton crew of the ship in which he stood.



But you have no reason to fear me.
I'm going to offer you a deal far
superior to anything you had as
mere soldiers. I offer you the
chance to go anywhere you wish as
warriors with worlds at
your command.

Does it matter who leads this fleet?
As long as you conquer galaxies,
I don't think it does.

Our first destination...

EARTH!



He didn't hate anyone now. He was
above that.
He turned away from the port and look-
ed about at the ship that would mold his
destiny, knowing he was free of Deald's
World, free of the dust. He needed
neither now.
Now he was God on his own.
Now he would get even.

